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ALDA
PRESENTATION BY RACHEL ARFA
SEPTEMBER 9, 2023

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>> MARSHA SWETIN:
Try again.
For those of you who don't know me, my name is Marsha Swetin. I'm the President of ALDA Chicago and I'd like to welcome you on behalf of our organization.
It is my fortunate job to introduce Rachel. I had heard about Rachel a long time ago. And I was fortunate enough a number of years ago to sit on a panel with Rachel. I was the representative of late deafened adults. And it was a amazing discussion.
And that -- and I'm not going to embarrass you but put me more in awe of you than before.
Anyway, Rachel got named the commissioner of Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities by the former Mayor of Chicago, Lori Lightfoot. In July of 2020.
And she is the first deaf commissioner of MOPD. Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities. And the highest ranking deaf person to serve in a city government leadership role.
That's coming from Chicago, I understand a lot about Chicago politics. And that is really awesome.
Rachel leads the city of Chicago in efforts to make the City much more accessible. Which includes things like independent living, employment, youth transition, home modification, assistive technology, accessible housing, architectural accessibility.
Each one of those it seems to me would be a job in and of itself. So it seems to me pretty overwhelming.
She previously was employed as a staff attorney for Equip for Equality. Which the governor designated protection and legal advocacy, which advocates for the civil and human rights of people with disabilities.
Rachel is the President of the deaf and hard-of-hearing bar association, and in December 2019 made the motion using spoken language and ASL for deaf -- for ten deaf and hard-of-hearing attorneys to be admitted to the United States Supreme Court Bar.

Rachel served as the accessibility leader for the Women's March on Chicago. She's been board of directors with the Chicago cultural accessibility consortium and the board of directors of -- which supports artists of color, and artists with disabilities.

It is really our privilege and our honor to have Rachel here today. And I welcome her with very open arms.

(Applause)

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: Thank you.

Does this work? It's not working? Oh.

>> MARSHA SWETIN: I tried.

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: Where's the best place for me to stand? Should I stand over -- or what works best?

Rachel does it help you if I stand closer to the screen so you can read the captions instead of going like this?

Does that help you?

>> JOE: You're fine.

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: Do you want me to stand here or do you want me to stand here? Okay. I will.

We lost -- Marsha left.

Well, thank you so much for inviting me here to ALDA. This is a real honor to be here and I also want to thank carol and -- I know they both were not able to be here today to -- too, but they've been very helpful to me for setting up for today.

So for today I would love to share with you about the work that we are doing at the City of Chicago. But I also want this to be interactive. And I want you to feel free to ask any questions.

I would love to know who in the room is from Chicago?

So -- so what we --

>> DEIRDRE: Chicago and Oak Lawn. I work in Chicago.

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: So threeish people from Chicago. And then anybody else here from around...right?

Well, let me know. I want to make sure that you can hear me and that you can understand me. So please --

>> MARSHA SWETIN: They're going to get somebody to fix that.

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: Marsha said somebody is coming to turn on the microphone.

So let me know if we need to speak up if it's what you need. So I went to the ALDA convention in Milwaukee, and I was so blown away by ALDA. And I would -- went to all of the deaf-related convention sessions and I feel ALDA is the most open and welcoming organization. And I believe that the rest of the deaf and hard-of-hearing community has so much to learn from ALDA. And the reason why is because I don't think there's any judgment here at ALDA. And the people are so committed to communicating however works best. However is effective. And that really impresses me. And inspires me. So I want to applaud you for this space that you create here today. And every day with ALDA.

So a little bit about myself. So Marsha shared that I'm the Commissioner for the City of Chicago, Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities. I wish I had thought of bringing a picture that would better explain what that means. So the City of Chicago government, you have the Mayor, we have a new mayor named Brandon Johnson. And the mayor's job, among many jobs is to oversee different departments across the City. And the City there are 37

different departments. For example the department of housing, the department of buildings, the department of public health, the department of Streets and Sanitation. The department of Streets and sanitation plows the streets during the winter. They also -- oh. Hello.

Is that working? Okay. Good.

I see the look of relief on everybody's faces.

It's like when you change your hearing aid battery and you can hear again.

It's just like -- let me know if I need to adjust anything.

So there are 37 different city departments. There are also what we call sister agencies. Sister agencies are not city departments but they have a relationship to the city. For example city college s of Chicago. Chicago transportation authority. Which is the CTA.

There's another -- Chicago Housing Authority. So those are sister agencies.

So my department is one of those 37 departments where the Mayor's office, Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, we are the largest Mayor's office for people with disabilities in the country. There are some cities that have an office like mine. There are cities -- New York City, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Houston, St. Louis, Boston, Cambridge, Detroit. So those are some examples of big is hes and -- cities and then they have somebody like me in that role. For the struck Turks but a little bit different depending on the city.

But we have 37 staff members, and we have a number of programs.

So I'm the fourth Commissioner of the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities. I'm the first deaf person. The first three were all wheelchair-users.

And I think it's so important that we advocate for both physical accessibility, but also communication accessibility. I do not think it's an either/or. I think we have to talk about and prioritize both.

And we know sometimes we feel like people don't understand hearing loss. Right? We feel like sometimes people don't understand what kind of accessibility you need. That's part of what I have to do every day is to educate people. Because as people with hearing loss who use our voices, people often think we can hear more than we can.

And I don't have that speech discrimination to understand without using captioning or interpreters or other accessibility. So I feel like we always have to educate people.

Right?

So before I go on -- yes?

>> JOE: I know I'm retired now, but how about the -- with the MOPD, before she retired.

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: So Joe was asking about a former staff member at the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities.

Named Kate Cuby, she was the supervisor for a program that provided substance abuse prevention strategies for deaf and hard-of-hearing people. Statewide. It's a program that's funded through the State of Illinois. Kate Cuby, did retire. She retired

before I started so we never worked together.

Does that answer your question?

>> JOE: Okay. Thank you.

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: But we do have that program now. And we have a new program director. And we're in the process of hiring somebody under that program director to provide trainings to deaf and hard-of-hearing people around the state. This is one thing that we get from the State of Illinois.

So I think that before I go on, I want to honor our deaf awareness month. So September is deaf awareness month. And I think it's so important to honor each other and recognize and celebrate our experiences. So sometimes it's great to have hearing loss because it connects us with everybody. I would not know anybody here if I did not have hearing loss. And I cannot imagine not having hearing loss.

We also want to come together to share when thing right side frustrating. And we are trying to advocate. We come together and support each other.

I do want to honor a member of ALDA who has given so much time to ALDA. And a personal role model for me and that's John Walo -- Waldo.

Did people know who John is?

So John is going through some health issues right now.

So I just really wanted to share about how he -- because he's a lawyer and he's a advocate. He's somebody that inspired my.

-- inspired me. So I just really wanted to share how much I appreciate him. And I know he's done so much work on behalf of ALDA. And he cares very much about ALDA.

Another thought is -- so what I think about -- when I first started the job three years ago in July of 2020, I looked for role models or people who had this type of job, who worked in government. And who worked for a Mayor. So my job is to serve on the mayor's cabinet. Which means I go to cabinet meetings. So we have a cabinet meeting every week or EVERY other week -- every other week with the Mayor. Right now it's refer I other week. So we have one on Thursday where we come together and we talk about all the issues happening in each of the departments.

I researched to find another deaf person in July of 2020 who was serving on a member of a mayor's cabinet. And I could not find any. So I looked to find someone who was serving in a very high level, and I had to go back 20 years to a fictional character. Does anybody remember the TV show West Wing?

Yes.

Remember the show?

West Wing. So Marlee Matlin played a character on the show named Joey Lucas. And Joey Lucas was a campaign manager, a campaign strategist for the President.

And she also used a interpreter on screen. So that was another great representation.

And so when I was looking for role models in that -- there's not many. There's not very much representation of deaf people -- I will say the last three years we have seen a lot more representation. Especially where the use of Instagram, TikTok. I am not on TikTok, but many people tell me what they're watching on

TikTok.

But even Facebook. So I just wanted to pause and just open it up and see if anybody wants to share about a deaf person or role model that inspired you.

Do you want to share about someone who inspired you?

It can be somebody in ALDA. It can be somebody famous, it can be someone you know. But I thought that would be a nice thing to do in honor of deaf awareness month.

You want to raise your hand? I'll bring the microphone over to you.

>> JOE: Think of anybody...

>> DEIRDRE: Can you hear me? Okay.

My name is Deirdre. And in honor of deaf awareness month, I always looked at Helen Keller. And I always teach -- I'm a teacher. So I always teach my students about Helen Keller and how Helen Keller always inspired me because you know, she was not only deaf but blind too. And I always look at her because she can do what she did, then I can do it too. You know?

So that's -- she's my role model. So...I just wanted to chip in on that.

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: Thank you.

>> DAWN: Somebody that inspired me, I'm like, wow, I wish I was like that. And he was a deaf doctor. And he never gave up. He kept going. And I can't remember his name. And he was deaf at ALDAcon I think two years ago. Remember his name, Marsha?

>> JOE: He lived -- keynote speaker for ALDAcon in Kansas City.

And he was a deaf doctor, right? From Kansas City. We have to look it up on the program book.

I don't have a name, though.

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: I know there's a deaf doctor from.

>> MICHELLE: Named Dr. Sa -- Michigan, named Dr. Sasa. And he's been doing family medicine for years. He's a wonderful man too. Anybody else want to share?

No? Okay. I think that is so important for all of us to know other people who succeed because we can motivate and encourage each other. And there needs to be more of us out there representing. So for example having a deaf doctor, or a deaf lawyer like myself, helps other deaf people to know that deaf people can do anything.

Yes?

>> JOE: We didn't have a deaf President, for -- a speaker in Milwaukee, but I forgot her name too.

A deaf President, she was the President for college out in North Carolina.

Can't remember her name, though.

>> MARSHA KOPP: Sarah, last name starts with an f.

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: Jane Fera -- the one from Gallaudet?

>> JOE: From Gallaudet, but a hearing college in North Carolina.

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: I think her name is Jane Fer -- Fernodis, and I think it's Meredith College.

(Check spelling).

>> Hi. I took some sign language classes. At the Progress Center in Forest Park. And I really appreciate ed the service.

And having the opportunity to practice sign language. And meet with one of -- other -- other people who had hearing loss. And the very fine teachers they had there.

I don't know if -- if your office in Chicago has relationships with the Progress Center. What would the connection be? They're very good.

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: Yes. We do have -- we have relation -- what? We do have relationships with the centers for independent living. So Access Living, and Progress Center, they're independently -- they're both wonderful organizations.

Janet.

>> JANET: I'd like to mention somewhat local or at least someone who's known in the state, and that's Tina Childress. She is a audiologist with hearing loss.

And she is -- has been very active in spreading awareness and -- and spreading educational information on -- online. She has worksheets and she's just really great. As far as the advocacy and the -- and the work that she does.

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: Absolutely. Tina Childress, is a friend of mine. I always learn so much of her. And I know she's on the board of ALDA and how much she loves ALDA as well.

Yeah. Yeah.

Joe?

>> JOE: Forgot the name. Jane Fernandez. Okay. She was the President. She was the President of Antioch college.

While I'm on the microphone I should mention Rick Brown. He was a Judge who -- Supreme Court in Wisconsin. Who's 35 years, and he had to use -- he had to use text -- captioning in order to communicate with everybody. So I think -- I'm impressed what he had done. It was 35 years with a hearing loss.

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: Yes. Judge Brown. I know Judge Browne. So I went to the same law school that Judge Brown graduated from, the University of Wisconsin law school. And my first semester of law school, one of my professors gave us a mid-term. Most law school professors do not give mid-terms, they only give you one test, at the end of the semester. And he created -- 100 percent of how you do on that test. But these professors did give us a mid term. And I thought it was very, very, very hard. And so I left the mid-term discouraged. But right after that there was a meeting with the Board of Trustees, and Judge Brown was one of the Board of Trustees. At that time. So I lost this mid-term and I went to this lunch to meet him. And the first thing I saw was that he had a cochlear implant. And I have bilateral cochlear implants. And I thought Judge Brown can do it, he's a Judge out of Wisconsin, a college board. If he could do it, I could do it, no matter how I screwed up on this mid-term. So that was a really powerful and important moment. And one that I always remember when I think about law school.

>> DIERDRE: I just wanted to say another person I like too. Mandy Harvey, the singer. And I just -- and I'm not a good singer at all, so I wish I was a good singer like she was. But she's -- still inspires me. And she's another person that hasn't given up either. So...

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: I agree. Mandy Harvey is great. She

was at the HLAA convention. Was that -- where was that one?

>> JANET: St. Louis, maybe?

>> DEIRDRE: St. Louis maybe? I can't remember.

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: I don't know why I'm thinking Kansas.

St. Louis might be right. So she was so great, and down to earth. She's somebody with hearing loss. And I think now she has a cochlear implant and she also has a baby. So they brought her back on the TV show America's got talent. To do her song again. And it was Simon, one of the judges, he got very emotional.

It was cool to see.

And so thank you. Let's do a round of applause for each of us and the people we shared.

So what I want to do is share with you more about what my office does. So that you're aware of the services that we provide.

This is where you'll find us. We have two office locations. So I have an office at City Hall on the first floor. So if you're ever at City Hall, please come and stop by and say hi. And then I also have an office at the west side of Chicago, the address is 2102 West Ogden. It's right across from the Jesse Brown VA. So there used to not really be a name of the building, but we looked back in the records. So Mayor Harold Washington dedicated that building in 1987. And we went back to look at the records, he named the building the Central West Center. And so we decided to bring back that name to honor the vision that Mayor Washington had. But something else we also added that I will talk about a bit, is before -- you can drive by that building and you would not notice it before. It's not far from United Center. You probably don't drive by it.

But now there is artwork on that building. And the reason why is because I wanted to add the visual narrative about what it means to be a person with a disability.

So people -- anybody can stop by the City of Chicago hours are 8:30 to 4:30.

So the vision for the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities is to make the City of Chicago the most accessible and inclusive city in the nation.

(Phone ringing).

A song).

>> Somebody's phone is going off.

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: Okay. It is off. Okay. So that's our vision.

This is recent images. Is from the Disability Pride Parade.

>> JANET: I have a question. I was wondering Rachel, when exactly was the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities established? Like under whose administration?

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: So that's a great question. So the Mayor's office -- a little bit of history. The Americans with Disabilities Act was passed on July 26, 1990. And at that time Mayor Daley was the mayor. He was involved in the ADA. So that fall in October of 1990, he decided to create the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities. In the way that he did it was at that time there was the Department of Aging. And the City -- it's no longer called the Department of Aging. What he did was he split it off, disability services, and he created the Mayor's Office for

People with Disabilities.

There is still the Department of Aging, but now it's called department of family and support services. I think that's a mouthful.

But so we -- I credit Mayor # Daley for deciding to create the office. So it's in direct with the involvement of the ADA. So I feel like the ADA has impacted us in so many ways. I was 13 years old when the ADA was passed in 1990. And I -- at that time, when I found out this law had been passed, I didn't realize that we did not already have legal protections under the ADA. I did not realize until it was passed that we did not already have Civil Rights under the ADA.

And then in my last job my job was to enforce the ADA and make sure that people followed the ADA. So again the ADA has having an impact on me. Because I now work in an office that was inspired by the passage of the ADA under Mayor Daley. Good question.

So this is at the Disability Pride Parade, which is always the third Saturday of the month. So that's always a nice time.

So this is the -- some of our staff of MOPD. Oops. This computer is very sensitive.

So we are walking down -- and I encourage you to join us if you ever want to. Usually the third week on -- third Saturday of July. And it's usually very hot day.

And so we had the Mayor come out for that.

So we had accessibility at the inauguration. But one very cool thing is that we are working on more communication access. And so we now have sign language interpreters on staff too. I don't know if all the cities that have sign language -- sign language interpreters on staff. So any interpreter needed, we have a interpreter available instead of telling people come back, we have to get somebody. And then of course we have a great relationship with Cathy and many other captioners too. Cathy's the best. So...yes?

>> MARSHA SWETIN: Given that Mayor Lightfoot had hearing loss, how did that affect your work or her work with people with hearing loss or deafness?

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: That's a good question. So Mayor Lightfoot had hearing loss. And if you look in pictures, you can see her hearing aid. She had a tiny -- behind the ear hearing aids, when we were required to mask up at press conferences, I can see her take off her mask and then the next thing -- what was the next thing that she would do? After -- yes.

She would adjust her hearing aid. And it was such a sign -- silent moment that I think most people would not notice. But I always noticed because I knew exactly what she was doing.

So to answer your question, I find that people who do not identify as having a disability use some frame of reference for their experience. For example if you have a brother with mental health needs, you're always going to refer back to that experience. Or how many of us when we tell somebody we have hearing loss, they say oh, my brother's cousin's sister has hearing loss. Now I know the ABCs. So people go to that frame of reference, whatever that frame of reference is. So for Mayor Lightfoot, her father was deaf. He lost his hearing in his 20s and he was sick in a coma.

And when he came out of the coma, he had lost his hearing. And so as his daughter, she watched him grow up without hearing, with that experience. She saw him. He was a Black man growing up in a small town in Ohio. He did not have the same job opportunities available. But also because he had hearing loss, so he worked three jobs. And I Wonder -- I talk to her about this. I Wonder what it would be like if he had the opportunities we have available today. Maybe he would not have needed to work three jobs to support, money to support their family.

And then of course Mayor Lightfoot had her own hearing aid. And she would talk about. She really came out and really talked about it.

And I was always so impressed and inspired. She said I wear hearing aids, this is my experience too.

So I think that that issue, I have a great connection because she understood through her father's experience what it was like. Mayor Johnson has had a lot of experience with the disability community. He met with many different disability groups through -- when he was on the campaign trail. And he has a brother that had addiction. And who eventually overdosed. So I think that is his -- that is a personal connection to disability. But he also has a broad interest in disability too.

So I think that it's -- and I -- we have a -- we are podcast and we're interviewing the Mayor on Monday. So I hope he will share the podcast about the sign language interpreter. So I'll forward that to everybody so you can watch it. We have a -- it on a Zoom recording so you can watch the interpreter and the captions, whatever you need.

I made sure that it was accessible.

So maybe on Monday I'll find out new information.

So I wanted to share about something that I'm really proud of.

Which is about a year and a half ago, I believe about two years ago, during the pandemic, the -- when we were still shut down and I was still doing my job, I was getting a lot of phone calls from companies that said they wanted to hire people with disabilities. But they didn't know where to go. And then we were also getting phone calls from people with disabilities who wanted help finding jobs. So I got Mayor Lightfoot's support to open the career center to help people with disabilities find jobs. And we had to go to city council to get approval in our budget. City council has been -- there are 50 Aldermen, 50 Aldermen who represent a different part of the City of Chicago.

And we got that approval. And then we created a career center. So this is the ribbon cutting from a year ago to open up the career center space.

And we help job seekers with disabilities find jobs. And one of the things we wanted to address was the fact that people with disabilities do not have access to assistive technology. So we added three computer stations with adaptive equipment for them to use. And then we added a standing desk so that it can be modified to different heights. And then that was a nice example of using furniture that's available for disability-specific purpose. Because if someone's in a wheelchair or they need to stand, we can modify the height of the computer stations. So we have had the

career center for a year. And we had a lot of success. In our first 12 months we talked to 176 job seekers. And the requirements for coming to us if you want help, if you are somebody who needs help finding a job, you have to be age 16 or older, you have to have a disability, and you have to want to find a job. That's very simple. Young people can work with us, and they.

Can also work with the department of rehabilitation services. They don't have to choose. Because there is services that both offer -- what's really incredible is that from the time we open up and find somebody -- and we can do that immediately, to the time someone is hired in a job is 108 days, which is pretty fast. That's really fast. That's about three and a half months. From the time that we meet with you and we get a place in a job. That is a incredible achievement.

So here we are working with people of any kind of disability and many people have experience, barriers getting a job. So coming together and providing that support, we're able to make a difference in people's lives that way.

And then we also take a very holistic approach. So if somebody needs access to mental health or needs housing or any other services, we will help connect them to other city services available. Because if you're unhoused, it would be hard for you to find a job when you really need to find a place to live. For example. So really looking through -- going through all the priorities. We're trying to add a job coach service. And next year I'm trying to ask for that in my budget request.

And then I would like to also add some travel training. Many people with disabilities need training on how to use different public transportation systems. That's an important piece to be able to get to and from a job and have that independence.

Another thing that we help people with, which I took from my experience at Equip for Equality, is helping people to figure out whether or not they should disclose their disability when applying for a job. Because many people are nervous, or have experienced discrimination. And have experienced that employers will try to turn them away.

And sometimes -- and then we also provide retention services, where if you -- everything is fine at work but maybe you get a new supervisor or work changes, you might need some help with that. We can come and help with services and help find the support you need. So very important part. Any questions?

>> JANET: Where is the Career Center located? In City Hall?

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: The Career Center is located at Ogden space.

>> JANET: Oh, okay.

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: The building I showed. The Central West Center, so there's parking. There's -- it's easy -- I think it's -- people should be able to get there. Could stop by and ask to make a appointment, you can email us.

So we have options. We're also able to meet with people at City Hall if that's easier too. But our offices are at the Central West Center. So I think there's some really interesting data that that we found in our first year.

So we found that the numbers -- 54 percent of our clients are

Black, African American, 35 percent are white. About 5 percent we don't know. About 4 percent are multi race.

Gender break down, about 55 percent are male. 40 percent are female.

What's interesting too is that here age range is from 17 all the way to age 72. So we serve people of any age.

And then another really interesting thing that we've learned is that people with disabilities experience barriers, and it does not matter what education level is. So our break down from our job seekers, education, 32 percent have a high school diploma or GED. 21 percent have some college.

And 12 percent have a associate degree. 7 percent have a graduate degree. 19 percent have a B.A. degree. But then the education levels of our job seekers who were able to get employment.

It's about similar make up. So involves -- the make-up too. So we're seeing that people have barriers to getting jobs regardless of what their education level. And I don't think we needed to stand up and tell us, but I think it confirms that the barriers that people with disabilities experience. Which is why we need as much support.

And our disability types.

Vary as well.

People with physical disabilities, which is actually very consistent.

So most of our job seekers have disabilities, which I think is noteworthy because people with disabilities are seeing how they have a disability, and so they also are more likely to identify as having a disability. If you have a invisible disability, you might not be as willing to identify having a disability.

Any questions about the Career Center?

I'm willing to share that with you so if you know anybody with a disability who lives in Chicago who might need help finding a job, please have them -- please let them know they can come to us and we can also help -- provide help with an I plying for a job or helping -- applying for a job or helping to navigate the reasonable accommodation process. Or if you experience any -- any questions on how to access, please contact us, we're happy to provide support.

I know that a lot of people with hearing loss are nervous about sharing that they have a disability. Especially because the employer assumes that you need sign language interpreters or they may -- or they think that we're expensive.

But we're not expensive. Those are -- to have those accommodations. An know some have experienced this type of discrimination.

So I wanted to change topics and talk about these murals that we created. So I wanted to create a visual narrative about our building and what it means to have a disability.

So we worked with a artist named Sam Kirk and she painted beautiful murals all over the city. Including inclusive murals. This is one of my favorite. And I call this more of an employment piece. So here you see a teacher with a missing arm. And he's standing in a blackboard, so he looks like a teacher. And there's

this young person next to him. And he's writing out the words "pride" and I think it's so important to show that we have teachers with disabilities. Like Deirdre here. And I talked to someone at the Ford Foundation who told me that the three hardest images of people with disabilities to find are people with disabilities who are teachers, people with disabilities who are journalists, and people with disabilities in the medical field.

So the image in the middle is someone who's wearing -- that's because we have someone on our committee who talks about how she has autism. And she wears -- and people with autism can identify with wearing headphones. They use different noise cancelling purposes. But maybe for other reasons.

And there's computer language around her so she looks like she's working as a computer programmer. And then the image on the other side of it is a doctor in a white coat who's using a wheelchair and he's helping a patient. I think that is so powerful. Because the assumption is that maybe he's the patient. But because he has a white coat on, you can tell that he's a doctor. And I think that's an important visual representation.

If you'd like to come and see these murals, they're outside. And walk around and see them. And there's some tactile pieces. So if you touch pieces of the mural, there's different textures that you can feel. And this one with the people playing soccer, on the green. And that was painted by the artist's assistant. And that assistant's other job is as a cake decorator. So she used cake piping technique to create the grass. And you can feel it.

So this is the day that we opened the Career Center.

And launched the mural. And then we also have a poem. A poem throughout the murals. Lily Diego Johnson, who has a disability. And she grew up in Chicago.

And she never allowed anybody to publish her poetry before. But it turned out -- and her sister lived next store to the artist and somehow they connected. And so Lilly felt like she wanted to have her poem up. So the poem about -- about how many people assume that somebody with a disability wants to be cured. For example how -- everybody probably heard the question, if you could take a magic pill to be hearing, would you?

That concept that the assumption that maybe we don't accept our deafness, our disability. And everybody has a different perspective. Some of us would take that magic pill. But some of us may or may not. But it's a great topic. But it's our choice to decide, not society's choice. So I really like the poem, I feel like the poem touches on that.

Yes?

>> Can you go back one more slide?

Can you go back?

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: Go back?

You can find the mural --

And I really like this one too.

Because they're in their dresses, the journalist -- we need to tell our story. We need to have journalists with disabilities.

So here's a image of a woman that looks like she is a director, and she's wearing a -- she is holding a board like the director would as you see -- the scene and cut. And there's a

representation of hearing loss here. So first the director is signing, sign language, ready." And the woman at the end, with the gray hair and yellow shirt she has a cochlear implant.

So if you look here, you see a circle. She has a cochlear implant and she's signing the word "yes" like yes.

And the man next to her, he's wearing hearing aids, he's like what would you think? Yeah. I need to do this.

And then the image of -- at the corner of the screen, he's signing the sign for welcome.

Welcome.

And I think it just is nice to show the variety of hearing loss but also to show that our stories need to be told. And to honor that. But we need to tell our stories, not have other people tell our stories for us. And you can see this little screen over the artist used what's called lenticular.

Perfect. Technology.

And so that is almost like where if you walk by, it moves. Yes.

So when you walk by this, this sign moves, so you can see the woman saying yes, and you can see the man signing "welcome" and it goes back and forth like this.

However, this is brand-new technology. And when it rains, the moisture got stuck in between. So it caused some damage. So now we're trying to figure out what is a long-term solution here. But I hope we'll be able to find another solution here.

So if that piece is not there, the -- that piece is not -- this is still up. But not the moving piece.

So this is -- it's important to have visual representation of what our lives look like.

Any thoughts or questions?

Or anything -- anything thinking about it, you see these images? Do you think these are accurate images of representatives?

So another way to make art is we had a artist event program and it was funded through the department of cultural affairs. Special event and has with the national endowment for the arts. So we selected Ari Granados, and she uses different multimedia to create images. So I'm standing with her. And I along a series of works. She had a workshop called disabling Utopia. And she challenged people who came to create dioramas. About what would a perfect world look like with your disability. And they used a lot of really fun bright colors and images. Ari is now doing another fellowship called three bodies, which is a partnership between 3Arts, UIC, and maybe Access Living. So she will be at UIC for this year.

So love to pay attention to her work.

So we had a number of events.

So another thing that we do is we work on accessible transportation.

So we have accessible transportation. So for example we work closely with Pace paratransit. I don't know if anybody here uses Pace paratransit or wheelchair accessible taxis. You may know people who do. So we make sure that there is not a long wait time and we make sure that any problems that come up, that get solved. Right now there are challenges that ever since COVID hit, there

have not been as many taxi drivers on the road. And there's also not been as many uber, Lyft, drivers as well. And that's also causing a problem with the number of wheelchair accessible taxis available to so many people who use wheelchairs, are not able to -- they have to wait longer. And that's not okay. And that's something we're trying to fix.

And the other side, this issue, is we like to honor our taxi drivers who go above and beyond and provide services to people who use wheelchair accessible taxis. So this is the ceremony that we had at the end of last year. And these are all the drivers that we honored.

Eight. It was...so it was about ten different drivers. And so they got recognized. But then we also gave them a medallion. They have to pay a little bit for the medallion, but otherwise they are able to get their own medallion and become a smart business own -- small business owner. And so they brought the families. This is a very proud moment for them. So this is a picture of a wheelchair accessible taxi. So using the side entrance.

We -- at the center we also have events to help people with disabilities get jobs, different cultural organizations. So we partner with different cultural organizations.

We also hold different resource fairs. So if -- ALDA is welcome to have a table where we bring different organizations together. So that people can come and ask questions. And get information.

So this is our podcast. I will email you the link. It will be easier. But the first podcast episode was a interview with me and -- and then our next episode was about people who have a conviction or other criminal background and what that means and how to help them find jobs. And then we're doing another podcast about the service animals, that will come out soon. And then on Monday we'll interview Mayor Johnson on the podcast as well. And they are captioned and sign language interpreters at the YouTube link. So we have different workshops. We have people who are looking for jobs.

So this is very exciting. We -- the city has a lot of COVID recovery money. So we were asked to give out and manage a program that will give \$500 cash grants to students with disabilities in Chicago who meet standard income requirements. So we will be able to give about \$500 to students with disabilities. Which is picking an organization to work with. But I would love you to help us share that information when it becomes available. And Deirdre, I'm looking at you because maybe you know some Chicago Public Schools connections too.

And then this is the very prominent program we have which is the home modification program. One of our largest programs. As we age we might acquire disabilities or not be able to use the stairs to come in and out of our home. So our home modification program provides -- we're able to go to the home and instead of stairs, we'll put a lift or a ramp so that you're able to still get naught of your house and -- in and out of your house and be able to live independently at home. That's a very important program for us. And I'm asking for more money this year, in our budget so we can help even more people.

If you're outside of the city, I know that the State passed a law to make more money available to -- I'm not sure exactly how -- I can find out how people can access those dollars. For services.

We also provide -- we also work with other city departments on accessibility. So we help them become more accessible. And then another thing that we do is we work with the City to make all City buildings accessible. And make sure that any building that provides services to the public is accessible. For example libraries or the Department of Public Health or the police station. So we work with them to evaluate that accessibility.

And we hired some staff members to help us go out and literally take a tape measure and they look at requirements to the law and they will measure to make sure that the doorways are at least 36 inches wide. And make sure that there's a ramp or other access and make sure there are grab bars in the bathroom. And these are the types of accessibility that are required under the ADA.

And so we have done -- we also help people with resources for housing.

And then these are some of the locations around the city where we do the accessibility inspection. So our impact is made citywide, not just in one neighborhood. We are in just about every region of the city.

And then we also recruit mental health centers and we evaluated those.

This is another really great program that I love. Many people with disabilities can't access food. Maybe the food pantry is not accessible. Or they may not have transportation to get to the food pantry. So we partnered with some organizations to create a program that provides a home delivery of a food pantry box that includes pantry staples and fresh fruit and vegetables. And fast so successful, we just got opportunity to extend the program another six months. And then we are trying to find more -- but this is a great way that we partner with our communities.

And then this is the program that Joe asked about.

We provide a presentation on substance use prevention, strategies. So if you know of any program for deaf and hard-of-hearing students, we would be happy to present to them. And then another great program that we have is our personal assistance program. So in the state of Illinois also has a program. So we are -- you can get help in your home. So our program provides up to six hours of home help a week for anybody that qualifies, whether it's maybe helping to clean or cook or meal prep or budgeting or any help you may need about the home. And this is a really important service to help people stay in their homes.

So that's another program that we provide.

And then now we are getting into our budget process. So the way it works is that all the departments had to create a proposal for their budget. For the next year. So I turned that in, and then in October once we have all the numbers, we have to go in front of city council and city council and other Aldermen get to ask us whatever questions they want. It's like a test. And you have to prepare answers and everything possible. We have a lot of

new Aldermen who have never done this before. So I expect it to be very difficult this year.

So some of our priorities for this year. To ask for more money for the personal assistance program. I'm going to ask for more money for our home modification program. I also think it's important in the city that we track data about people with disabilities. Because if we are not including the data collection, it's hard to measure what we need or where the impact of services on all of us. I'm also working on making sure we got funding for youth employment. To support young people with disabilities. And summer jobs and year round jobs. I also want to serve people who acquire disability and the community funding -- I want to expand our Career Center services and I also want to continue to work on accessible transportation.

So I just wanted to take some time now to find out are there any certificate -- services or tasks that you think in Chicago even, I'll start in Chicago, and then the other areas where you think members of the ALDA community need help?

So I'll pause for any questions. That's pretty much the end of my presentation. But that's an overview of the services we provide. But I would love to know any comments or questions that you have.

>> This is really minor. And kind of a tangent, but I pay to go on one of those architectural boat tours. And I couldn't understand anything. I wear hearing aids. It was so loud, from the people and the PA system.

And my husband had to keep telling me what they were saying.

It was just not right. You know? And I asked them do you have something in print? Because you say the same thing all the time.

On this boat tour. You know?

And no, they didn't. You know, and this is one of -- this was the Wendela one. It was very popular. And I was shocked that they didn't have anything providing for people with a hearing issue. And you know, or a electric ticker tape wording that you could read. Nothing.

So...I was shocked.

>> MARSHA SWETIN: I did -- I experienced something like that when I was in Seattle. I took my family on a trip -- just a day trip to one of the outer islands where Indigenous people had lived. And on the boat trip over and back, the captain was talking, and I couldn't hear anything. And at the event itself was the same thing.

And I contacted John Waldo, and told John Waldo about this.

Because he is' always looking for those kinds of places to help.

And what was interesting is that he contacted them, and I didn't realize, but Seattle has one of the largest deaf and hard-of-hearing communities in the country.

And he was able to get them to provide hard copies for everybody who would go on the -- their trip and the company contacted me and refunded my money for my whole family on that trip.

And I know it's hard to be a squeaky wheel. I'm a very

squeaky wheel.

When I was first diagnosed with hearing loss, I just wanted to crawl inside some hole somewhere and never, never come out again.

But almost shortly thereafter, I got in touch with ALDA. And it really, truly saved my life. And ever since then I've been a very loud and strong advocate for accessibility.

And I think I talked to Rachel about this before, and I know Marsha knows, I made it my mission to get my tempo -- temple accessible. We are a very, very -- very into accessible, but not into deaf accessibility. And so that has now been part of our whole accessibility programs, we have interpreters, we have CART for any holiday, for any service, for any program. We just have to know, you know, ahead of time, holidays and services we know that. But for anything else.

And I think that's -- you know, if something like that -- that whole thing happened, and it can -- we can get help and make it work, that's worth the effort.

Unfortunately the AMC Theaters are not as willing to work with us and give us open captioning days at the movies.

>> JANET: Deirdre and I generally go to The Streets of wood Field. There are numerous AMC Theaters within the Chicago area that do offer open captions.

>> MARSHA SWETIN: But you have to know when.

>> JANET: Yes, yes. But if you look up on the AMC app or the AMC website and you know, you can look at -- look up your preferred Theater and it will show you with the open captioning showings are. And actually the manager of the Streets of wood Field one sends an email out with listing all of the open captioned shows, which is very convenient.

So you know, if -- for an AMC you know that you're interested in, you might want to contact the manager. See if they could do that as well.

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: I was going to answer that. Are you going to say something in response to his -- or something different?

>> I have something. I was going to go --

>> TOM GARVEY: Go back to Kim's comments about the boat. Most recently at the Museum of science and industry, yeah, and did a tour on the submarine. And using my phone, trying to use Otter. Only got one bar in there. Otter.

Right? So this -- not good at accessibility at the Museum of science and industry. Kind of outdated.

Couple other things I thought of. I was wondering how much deaf organizations are there in Chicago?

How many deaf organizations. Rich.

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: Let me respond to that first and then we'll talk about the other organizations.

Okay?

So first I just wanted to go back to the first thing you said. And so minor issue -- it's not a minor issue, it's your right under the ADA to be able to participate in the Wendela boat ride. So first I believe -- my email is here. Please email me.

So this is my email address. Please email me. Please email me, tell me what happened and what date and what you asked for.

And I'll reach out to Wendela, because I think it's important for them to hear. You wanted to --

>> KIMBERLY: There was difficult too because like the Otter app wouldn't work. There was too much noise in the environment for it to work properly.

So that was kind of frustrating because that happens in other situations too. You know.

Entertainment kind of things.

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: So talking about using Otter, so because I feel like since COVID we kind of use some of these automatic speech recognition technologies to try and fill in some of the gaps, but as we all know it's not perfect. It's not a substitute for Cathy or having realtime captioning.

I was sharing -- so they should provide you with the access that you need. So if you can email me your experience, I would like to reach out to them and work with them to think of solutions. I agree they should have -- I have asked for a script. And I was like no, but you go by the exact same buildings every time. I think one time they gave me a book. But the book is not really an equivalent experience. And which is like this building was in 1840s and this happened.

But they'll make jokes and other ways that we interact. And so the most recent time I took a boat ride, what I did was I went to the top level of the boat and I found where the speaker is. There's a little black area. And I opened up the Otter app so I was right next to the speaker. That worked well for a long time. And I managed my own expectations but it's not perfect. It's not a substitute. But I found the speaker so I was able to have my phone right by the speaker.

But I agree they should have a script or other ways to be able to -- I also recognize a group of speaking deaf people to come to Chicago about five years ago. And we asked for an interpreter. And there was a mix-up with the scheduling. So we told the tour guide we need -- read lips and we happened to get this guy that I nicked named, the most lipreadable person. We lucked out. It was this guy named Mark. And he enunciated every word perfectly. And I have never met anybody who was so easy to lipread. But that was luck. More than anything.

And I -- a bunch of read lips, we needed him to talk slower. But I think the Wendela needs to have a better option. So please email me if you're comfortable. You can also get some legal assistance. The organization I used to work for, Equip for Equality, provides -- they have lawyers, and they will help to advocate for you, tell you how you can advocate for yourself. But under the Americans with Disabilities Act, businesses which are called in the ADA, places of public accommodation, must provide access or an equivalent experience. Whether you go to the Museum of Science and Industry or a boat ride, they need to provide you with access.

And I'm always happy to help you figure out who the access person is in any of our Chicago organizations.

So I hope that helps.

Do you want to say anything else?

No? You're good, okay. And then talking about movie

Theaters. So one of the other issues -- I was thinking about it -- movie Theater captioning, I think that -- the movies you go to are open captioning, right? And that's why you go. And you -- do you -- or they set it up?

>> DEIRDRE: They set it --

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: Why don't you tell --

>> Just opened captioning. So there is no setup.

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: I mean do you ask them to set it up?

>> JANET: No. The Theater or the distributor -- from what I understand, movies are all digital ly, you know, move now. They don't have actual reels of film anymore. So any movie I can actually be open captioned. The Theater simply has to select that option when they're showing it. And as a -- so it's up to the Theater, you know, which showings and which movies. It's up to the Theater which showings and which movies they decide to caption. Open caption.

You know. There's -- Theater -- movies always have the closed caption ability. Either using the captivu, that I think is the most common thing now. But those are not perfect by any means.

You know, they fall out of the cup holder, the gooseneck, you know, falls down during the movie. And sometimes of course that -- they don't program correctly or they're simply not charged. So open captions are certainly more accessible for everyone.

So I would recommend, you know, making -- be that squeaky wheel. You know. Ask the manager.

>> MARSHA SWETIN: Oh, at the AMC Theater I was just at recently, we were told that they -- we have to have a minimum of ten people before they will -- before they will do open captioned. We were only three.

You know? So...

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: Is there...

>> KIMBERLY: I'm been to the movie house -- to be made with captioning ability. And it's amazing they can make a movie without it. Around.

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: Yes. You're right. Because for most people, even people who don't have hearing loss, watch captioning too. So I thought about the question of what do we need around captioning in movie Theaters in Chicago. For example I feel like a lot more deaf people will go to the movies if it was open captioning because many people have had problems with the captivu. When I go to the movies with Tina, she always said to them please set it by Wi-Fi, have somebody stand by us when the movie starts so we can get their attention, instead of having to leave and go back to the front desk. She's very good about that. Very adamant about that.

Because it just happens so many times that the device doesn't work. Yes, Jan?

>> JANET: There's actually -- I have been seeing a lot of Internet chatter about the upcoming -- I'm sure everyone is aware of Taylor Swift's tour that took place this year. It was a huge, huge tour.

And that was -- that was filmed. And it's going to be shown in Theaters, the Taylor Swift Eras tour. Is going to be shown in Theaters. And it does not have any captions. People have been

really -- there's been numerous petitions online. Talking -- getting captions for it. You know, on at least some showing. Apparently from what I recall in the conversations that I've read online, it is up to the producer to provide those captions. But the way that they filmed the concert, they didn't enable that ability. So now there's -- there's really -- there's a very large online push to -- for Taylor Swift, you know, to get that captioned for people.

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: That's unbelievable. I'm sure Taylor Swift can afford captions.

You would think that she would want to make it captioned.

So to Marsha's point, we have to be advocates. We should be -- shouldn't be worried about -- you know, I think sometimes, well, I'm not sure if I should speak up. We absolutely should. And we need all of us to be advocates. But you don't have to do it alone. So I would love for you to think about what is needed around movie captioning. If you think that members of ALDA would want more Theaters to provide open captioning and more times, maybe there's a bill or law that we could pass in the city to require that. And so forth.

So that's an opportunity there. Joe?

>> JOE: Okay. Picking a different topic entirely.

I remember about 40 years ago there was a new apartment building on the Near North Side of Chicago. That was just for deaf people only. And I wonder if they still have that apartment building or if they have -- not there anymore.

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: So I think you're thinking about the silent co-op at Belmont.

>> JOE: Yeah. That's it.

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: I think it's around 2500 west Belmont. So there used to be just deaf people who wanted to live there. But I guess there was a lawsuit filed a few years ago -- maybe 20 years ago, that said that you cannot have segregated housing for people with disabilities. So they had to allow people who did not have hearing loss to move in.

I've been over there. The last time I was there was probably about four years ago and I would say there were about 20 people with hearing loss there.

So it doesn't exist in the way that it used to. And it sort of brings up -- I think that people with hearing loss like to be around each other. But at the same time we also want to have the opportunity to be and to live where we choose.

So I'm happy to talk to you about ways to be an advocate.

Were any questions you have because you also should have captioning when you go to the doctor. I go to Northwestern for doctor's appointment. My profile shows that I prefer captioning. But what I find is that every time I show up when there's a captioner, but I don't really want a captioner for things, so I always tell them no. But it is something they do provide. I think if it was with an employment, with a specialist, I would want to use the captioning. But to be honest, I haven't used it.

But I think it's important for people with hearing loss to know that you can ask for captioning for your doctor's appointments.

They have to provide it by law.

And now the department of health and human services should issue some new proposed rules about what is required in healthcare. And they are asking for people to share their feedback. But this is an opportunity to make law, all the different rules and practices around how to serve people with hearing loss.

So that is out right now.

Are there any other questions or comments? You can also ask me questions about being a lawyer too.

I see a hand back here.

>> Yes, I have a completely different question. And I'm not sure how many people relate to that. But my husband and I live in our own home. And since I went bilateral three years ago I found that I'm completely deaf at night when I take my cochlear implants off.

I have since been trying to make our house safe for people who are deaf, and I am -- I have really been stymied, I've looked at Ego and Harris communication and all of that. But I'm not technically versed enough to know what is it that would make our house safe for both of us much because my husband also doesn't hear at night. And I wondered whether anybody had some ideas on that, whether you can recommend somebody who knows about this and consultant or whatever.

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: Thank you Elizabeth. I'll stand here so they can see me.

So just a couple of starting places.

So FEMA, the federal agency, can give out the visual smoke alarms. A vibrating smoke alarm actually. So that's free for people who are deaf and hard-of-hearing. I'll get the information and the contact person that you know. I also know that many other people use different apps connected to their phone, to other -- somebody's knocking on their door or has a phone call. And you can program your phone and set up different apps, I want to open it up to you all. At what do you have in your home.

And different alarm systems.

>> JANET: I know at least within the City of Chicago -- I don't know if this applies to any suburban areas -- but within the City of Chicago you can have a profile, I'm not sure if it's with 311 or -- or 911 app. But like for instance I -- you know, if I call 9-1-1 they're going to know automatically that I'm deaf. Because it's in my profile. And same with the fire department. You can indicate that -- that there's a disabled -- any type of disability. You can add that to your profile.

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: Thank you for reminding me. That's the notify 9-1-1 program. And you can go in there and put in any preferences about your communication access. So I wanted to -- went into my profile and put in that I have cochlear implants, because an emergency, if something happens. And an emergency basis I am put under an MRI. So I always want to be able to have record of that. Somewhere.

I see your hand up. Do you -- anybody want to share anything else that you have?

>> TOM GARVEY: Go back to how many organizations -- how many deaf organizations are there in Chicago.

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: I'm sorry. I forgot to answer your question. So your question is how many deaf -- how many other people have different services they have in their home. Before we go to that I will say that the Illinois telecommunication access, I tach provides the phones in the mail so they'll have additional alarm system. So I can work with you to have some additional tools and resources and email them out to everybody. Does that sound good, Elizabeth?

>> Yes.

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: So I don't -- your question, I don't know exactly how many deaf organizations there are, but I know there are groups like ALDA, the hearing loss association of America chapter, Lincoln Park chapter. I don't know if you want to talk about that.

Everybody knows about and if you want to share.

>> DEIRDRE: I don't know if people are aware of the national organization, HLAA, stab stands for Hearing Loss Association of America.

If you are not aware about them, I highly recommend looking up their website. Hearingloss.org. They have a lot of valuable resources. And I am the President of the local chapter call ed HLAA Chicago-Lincoln Park chapter. And we are slowly getting back on track due to the pandemic.

But -- I mean, you are welcome to reach out to me too. Or any questions.

And there's also another organization call ed HLAA Chicago-North Shore Chapter. And so we are the -- both chapters under the national organization of HLAA.

So we have meetings and we invite speakers to come talk about different topics. Related to hearing loss and we talk about different technologies and apps that you can use to help your life, living with hearing loss. So yes you can feel free to reach out to me too. Like Rachel said, that's a good question. I don't know how many organizations there are in the State of Illinois.

I do know there is the -- one in Springfield called the deaf and hard-of-hearing commission.

>> JANET: There's Chicago Hearing Society.

>> DEIRDRE: And Chicago Hearing Society as well. If I'm missing out on any other organization, please feel free to mention that.

RACHEL: Thank you. I know that the Walk4Hearing, which is hosted by HLAA, happens every September. September --

>> DEIRDRE: October 1st this year.

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: They moved it.

>> JANET: In Lincoln Park.

>> DEIRDRE: Right across from the Peggy Notebaert mew seam.

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: Make a plug for the Walk4Hearing.

>> Letting me do a little mention about the Chicago Walk4Hearing. And ALDA is welcome too. Everybody here is welcome to attend. We have one every year. And it's usually held in September. But this year it will be held on October 1st.

It's in a beautiful location. It is right -- it is in Lincoln Park. But it is right across from the Peggy Notebaert Museum. And near Lincoln Park Zoo. And we do like a 5K. You don't have to do

the whole route. You don't even have to walk, just come out and join the party.

But you can do the beautiful walk around the river. And --

>> JANET: Lake.

>> DEIRDRE: There are vendors like cochlear and advanced Bionics, they're usually there too. And I am in charge of the raffle. So I've been working hard over the summer to try to get raffles. So you can come and bring some cash and your credit card. And try to win some very, very cool raffles. At our Chicago walk.

But the Chicago walk tried to advocate for people with hearing loss in the City of Chicago, and the surrounding suburbs. So it does not -- do not have to have a hearing loss to come. Anybody can come. So I hope to see some of your faces there.

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: I have to say it is a great event. To meet people are from so many different organizations. Families come with their children. University of Chicago comes, child's voice, a lot of different organizations. So October 1st is a great way to meet people and to see a lot of different orgs.

Especially for people who have hearing loss. So it is a great event. It's almost always beautiful weather.

>> JANET: Sometimes.

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: I'm probably just jinxed it. It's going to be great and we'll have sunny weather.

But it is a really nice walk and a beautiful location. So I always try to make it.

So that's another place to learn about organizations.

Yes.

>> JOE: I know there's another deaf organization in Chicago. I don't know if it's still there. Chicago club for the deaf.

Is it still there or has it gone away?

I know it's been there for a long time.

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: I'm not sure what the status of the Chicago club for the deaf is. I know that it's a chapter of the Illinois association for the deaf. And I believe that that is -- the Illinois association for the deaf is trying to build new leadership but I'm not sure what happened to the Chicago chapter. So I'm not sure. I'll check on Facebook and see if it's still active. But I haven't heard much. There's another organization called deaf Planet soul and they just opened up a store, it's in another -- I feel like there's another walk. So come to the walk and that's a nice way to see. But we have so many people who are -- who identify with different organizations. And that's the beauty of hearing loss, you can find wherever you're comfortable. Whether it's here at ALDA. The cochlear chapter closed, right?

>> JANET: Yeah.

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: And now they're partnered. Did they merge into something else?

>> JANET: The Illinois cochlear implant Chapter of HLAA did actually -- we used to meet here in Dole hall in Plymouth place. We -- we dissolved I believe it was the beginning of 2022. During the pandemic. Because there was a lot of -- a lot of hearing aid companies and cochlear implant companies, they were merging. And there was so much information available online and through the manufacturers and through audiologists, that you know, we were just

that little slice of focussing on cochlear implants. And so I mean it's not -- that -- you know, the existing HLAA chapters certainly, you know, talk about cochlear implants and, you know, hearing aids and -- and even signing. Any type of hearing loss. So...so yeah. But ICIC, sadly is no longer.

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: And I'm sure part of that was because of the pandemic. The pandemic really put a lot of stress on a lot of different organizations. As we were isolated at home. You know, some things have a natural course. I know many of those members are active with ALDA, or the Hearing Loss Association of America. Or maybe they put their energies in other areas.

I know there's one -- HLAA chapter is very active. I believe they meet -- used to meet on Monday mornings at ten o'clock in the senior center in Northfield. It's a really nice place. And what's the name of the woman that organizes?

>> DEIRDRE: Elaine.

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: Elaine organizes that and also organizes a healthcare meeting with different healthcare providers in October. I want to say in November --

>> JANET: I don't think she's doing it this year quite honestly. But actually, since you mentioned Elaine McCafferty is the President of the North Shore chapter. This coming next Monday shall yes, this coming Monday, the 11th, Juliet Sterkins, which I'm sure some of you are aware of. A nationally known hearing loop advocate is going to be speaking at the North Shore senior center in Northfield. I'm -- I'm not sure of the exact address. I know it's online. But --

>> COMMISSIONER ARFA: I know her husband passed away about a year or two ago. John was also very helpful. So...so I think organizations change. New leadership comes in. But please use each other, all of us, including me with any help or resources that you need.

Any other questions or -- you want to share?

Well, thank you so much for helping me spending a Saturday afternoon with me. It was just such a pleasure and I want to thank Cathy for the captioning too and our sponsors for lunch.

I see your hand.

(Applause)

>> MARSHA SWETIN: Thank you so much, Rachel. It's always a pleasure to listen to you and be part of your presentation.

I want to thank Elaine Mueller burg. Did I get your name right?

Elizabeth.

Representing advanced Bionics for being here today. And providing lunch for us. And also to Stephanie and Carolina, from Sorenson caption call. For being here. If you have any questions about either one, I'm sure they'd be glad to talk to you.

We have a raffle. That will be doing momentarily.

We also have programs coming up. And you need to check our website. One of the things that we just decided it today, at the board meeting, was to have a calendar, a annual calendar that we can start putting things on the calendar and people know when things are coming.

>> SUE COLLINS: If wild apricot allows us to add the

calendar.

>> MARSHA SWETIN: Okay. And yes, we can take a picture of everyone and -- so don't leave.

We have two events in October. And a event in November, a event in December. So we're hoping that, you know, the word gets spread that we're doing things out there.

Donna, if you want to...

>> DONNA PUNZIO: Did everybody get a raffle ticket? Then we're good to go.

The first one will be caption call only show what's in the package. This will be the first one.

Somebody want to come up and...the number is 246051.

(Applause)

>> DONNA PUNZIO: The second one is -- the second raffle prize will be gift card from Portillo's.

994996.

>> SUE COLLINS: Yea!

Thank you.

>> DONNA PUNZIO: Now we have -- now we have two from trader Joe's and one -- one of the things is fall Halloween theme. That's going to be the one that's going first.

246043.

>> MARSHA KOPP: That's me.

>> TOM GARVEY: Yahtzee.

>> DONNA PUNZIO: Heavy.

Heavy, have a ball, y'all.

>> MARSHA KOPP: Oh, boy.

>> DONNA PUNZIO: The second one from Trader Joe's is a coffee, tea, cookies, and a candle.

Yes.

That's what that one is.

246052.

(Applause)

>> DONNA PUNZIO: Enjoy the chocolate cookies.

>> JOE: Thank you.

>> MARSHA SWETIN: Thank you Donna and Marsha and...

>> DONNA PUNZIO: Andy, me, Marsha and Linda.

>> MARSHA SWETIN: Linda and Andy. So I'm glad that we were able to have Rachel with us.

I would like to ask all of you to please come up here, we'll take a group picture.

-END-