

>> CHRISTY ABRAMS: Hi, everyone.
My name is Christy Abrams.
And I'm the Hard of Hearing Specialist here
at the Arizona Commission for the Deaf
and the Hard of Hearing.
Each May is Better Hearing
and Speech Month.
And this year the theme is
"Connecting People."

And with me today, I'm lucky to have
Michele Michaels, our Hearing Healthcare
Program Manager.

>> MICHELE MICHAELS: Hi, it's Michele here.
So glad to be with you today.
Thanks for watching.

>> CHRISTY ABRAMS: Here at ACDHH,
connecting people is part of our mission.
We are an energetic team.
We're small but mighty.
And we are a national leader in the
provision of communication access.
And when we have equal access
and effective communication,
people can connect to other people.
When we are Hard of Hearing
and do not hear all of the
sounds of speech,
it's easy to become isolated
from our friends and our family.
And using communication strategies
makes a big impact and helps us to connect.
Michele, what are some of
the strategies that
you use and that you find helpful at work
or at home with your friends and family?

>> MICHELE MICHAELS: Great question, Christy.
Yeah, you know, there are over
a million people
in Arizona who are Hard of Hearing
like me, Christy.
And so every day we're struggling
to hear and to communicate.
And so some of the things that I do is

I always request accommodations,
whether it is CART captioning
or assistive listening devices,
things like that. I always request those.
And I also ask people to look at me,
get my attention,
maybe wave at me, so that I know
to focus on them and their voice
and also be able to read their
nonverbal expression, okay?

That communication that happens that I can
see in their body language and their eyes,
the movement of their face,
that kind of thing.

So those are important things that I do
pretty much every day.

>> CHRISTY ABRAMS: That's great.

Those are some really helpful
strategies to use.

I know sometimes when we
are Hard of Hearing,
and myself growing up being
Hard of Hearing,
it can be really uncomfortable
to make others aware of our hearing loss.
And we really have to become teachers.
And we have to teach others what we need.
And we have to be our own
best self-advocates.

So it is really a learning process.

And I really want people out there
to know that they are not alone.

As you mentioned, there's more than
a million people right here in Arizona.

So ACDHH is here for you and
to share information and resources.

And we are glad to do that.

What are some of the programs, Michele,
that you oversee here at the Commission?

>> MICHELE MICHAELS: Oh, sure, yeah,
I'm happy to talk about that.

So the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and
the Hard of Hearing, we offer a lot of

programs and services to the community at-large from the Arizona Relay Service, which is you access that by dialing 711, to the free telephone program.

Anybody in Arizona who needs a phone to communicate better because of their hearing or speech loss, we've got those devices free of charge.

We also have the Hearing Healthcare Assistance Project that Christy and I work in.

And so people who are looking for hearing aids, we're going to connect with them, ask them some questions, help them find the resources they need for hearing aids, hearing healthcare. So those are some of the things that I'm working at as the Program Manager for this area.

>> CHRISTY ABRAMS: That's great.

I know Michele and I receive dozens of phone calls and emails every single day from people that are navigating their hearing loss and what it's like to be Hard of Hearing, trying to figure out their employment maybe, or have questions about how to connect with their doctor during a doctor appointment.

And they really aren't sure.

And that's what we're here for.

If you have any questions, we hope that you'll reach out to us and that we can help guide you and provide you with information and resources to help you cope with that.

And that's what we're here for.

Being Hard of Hearing, one of the most helpful things is to connect with other Hard of Hearing people. It really does help.

And at ACDHH we're here.

We want to help to empower you to do and live the best life you can and to be here with you on your hearing loss journey.

So you're not alone.

Is there any last things that you want to add, Michele?

>> MICHELE MICHAELS: There are a lot of support groups that are available virtually.

Some are in-person throughout our state and throughout the country.

So the Hearing Loss Association of America has several chapters here in Arizona.

Down in Tucson area, we also have the Adult Hearing Loss Association.

They have an actual facility, and they offer

a lot of virtual and in-person support groups

about hearing loss, tinnitus, cochlear implants, all of those kinds of issues.

So there's a lot of support out there that we can connect you to.

So just reach out to us.

And we're going to walk you through each individual situation.

So if you're going to a family gathering, you've got hearing loss, we'll say, hey, you know, tell your family members,

Hey, I'm Hard of Hearing,

and when you are standing and there's a whole lot of light behind you,

I can't see your face and

I can't read your lips.

So, you know, you can say,

hey, let's move over here.

Or let's go into a quiet room.

Or you can do things like,

Can we turn down some of that noise?

Or get away from that noise?

That will help. In the workplace,

We'll talk about how do you
make those accommodations.
So whatever your situation is,
if you reach out to us, contact us,
contact Christy or myself,
we're going to talk to you
about those things
and how we can help you
connect better with other people.
Regardless of your hearing loss,
we're going to help you.
>> CHRISTY ABRAMS: Absolutely.
We, Michele and I, understand.
We are both Hard of Hearing,
as we said ourselves.
We wear hearing aids.
We get it.
We empathize.
And we are here.
And we hope that you won't hesitate
to connect with us.
So have a great day, everyone!
Thanks for tuning in.
>> MICHELE MICHAELS: Bye!