



## **NEWS UPDATE**

# 2007 Let Them Hear Foundation Insurance Advocacy Program Landmark Achievements

**The Let Them Hear Foundation celebrated great achievements throughout 2007, and its Insurance Advocacy Program (IAP) was no exception. As many hard of hearing individuals know, insurance companies often deny coverage for hearing-related services. IAP believes the existence of such denials is an injustice and occasionally even illegal, so it conducts appeals to reverse them.**

As a result of IAP's work, numerous insurers now provide coverage for new hearing services. In 2007 alone, LTHF prompted ten insurers to modify their existing policies to provide full coverage for bilateral cochlear implantation. The modifications affect 158 million Americans. LTHF also helped pass legislation in four states requiring cochlear implant insurance coverage, and influenced another insurer to cover Bone Anchored Hearing Appliance (BAHA) implantation. In total, LTHF has successfully resolved over 500 appeals,

including almost two dozen state insurance commission rulings and over 40 independent medical reviews.

We look forward to continuing our successes in 2008 with your donations and support. Please read the following patient stories to further understand how important our work is. It is not possible without you.

**Brittany Goodspeed** was nine months old when her severe bilateral hearing loss was discovered. By age three, she had undergone seven surgeries, none of which were successful. When Brittany was 17 years old, her health care team determined only a BAHA could restore her hearing.

Unfortunately, Brittany's insurance provider – Tricare Prime – denied several appeals for coverage, so she contacted LTHF's Insurance Advocacy Program.

After several LTHF appeals, Tricare reversed its original ruling and approved coverage for Brittany's BAHA implantation. Brittany – now one of about 40 individuals for whom IAP has secured BAHA coverage – was elated. "Thanks to the Let Them Hear



*Brittany Goodspeed*

*Sheri Byrne-Haber founded the IAP program in 2004 and has walked the same path as many of those seeking help from LTHF. Sheri went head-to-head with her insurance carrier several years ago as she sought to secure treatment coverage for her hearing-impaired daughter. Now, several*



*Sheri Byrne-Haber  
Director of Advocacy*

*years later with a healthy and vivacious 16-year-old daughter, hundreds of successful case wins under her belt and a team of resourceful legal advocates, Sheri and the IAP team have improved the lives of millions of people.*

*"I don't think I realized how many lives we would touch and so quickly," says Byrne-Haber. "Every one of us on the IAP team relishes the opportunity to represent our clients and secure a win. But it's not about the win, it's about the person and life that we've changed by succeeding in our challenge. I've seen first-hand the difference that we make in someone's life."*

Foundation," she says, "I have a chance at better hearing! It is nice to know they are there for me and other people."

Today, 19-year-old Brittany studies chemistry and music at Boise State University. She plans to seek coverage for a second BAHA device, and will utilize IAP again should she need the help.

**Warren Barnett, 55**, was referred to IAP in early 2005. He was referred to IAP because his insurance provider claimed bilateral cochlear implants were only cost-effective for patients under the age of five.

Warren had suffered dramatically

*(Over)*



## Let Them Hear Foundation

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progressive hearing loss beginning when he was five years old. Yet he continued to push himself, using excellent lip-reading skills and limited input from hearing aids to eventually receive degrees in both Accounting and Business. For nine years, two of which he acted as President, Warren also served Self Help for the Hard of Hearing, now called the Hearing Loss



*Warren Barnett*

Association of America (HLAA).

While at HLAA, Warren interacted with multiple cochlear implant recipients. Their hearing results impressed him, so he obtained his first implant in October 2005. When Warren's insurer denied coverage for a

second implant, he contacted LTHF. Warren's case took almost 16 months to complete, even going to mediation. However, as part of Warren's appeal process, his insurer made bilateral cochlear implantation available to all who qualify, regardless of age.

After receiving his second implant in August 2007, Warren says, "[my] implants give me options I did not previously have. For example, I would like to spend more time becoming acquainted with music. I have a lot of catching up to do."



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