

Designing Buildings for Hard of Hearing People

unity

CONVERSATION

Juliette - Did you see this?

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THE POST-CRESCENT

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THE POST-CRESCENT'S OPINION

Building plans should include hearing loops

Two signs show that hearing loss is becoming a bigger problem in the United States.

First, there's the movement of the baby boomer generation into the ranks of senior citizens. Hearing loss increases with age and, with a greater percentage of the population 60 and older, the percentage of the population with hearing impairment will grow, too.

Second, studies are saying that more young people are having hearing problems today than in the past. There's no evidence of what's causing it, but common sense says the popularity of MP3 players is a culprit.

With that backdrop, it'll be more important that accommodations for the hearing impaired be considered in public areas.

Hearing loop systems have proven to be a godsend to those

with hearing loss in larger enclosed areas like churches, theaters and auditoriums.

They involve a wire placed around the perimeter of the area that picks up sound and magnetically sends it to equipped hearing aids or headphones.

While churches have been in the forefront of using hearing loops locally, other public spaces have them, too, such as the Fox Cities Performing Arts

Center.

Starting at a few thousand dollars, they may not be prohibitively expensive, and may be worth it in terms of serving the public.

Given the numbers of hearing impaired, hearing loops should at least be part of the conversation when public building projects are planned.

Our changing population will appreciate it.