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Sounds: Brand New

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Documentary Premiering in DC Shows How Technology Allows Deaf Adults to Thrive in their Personal and Professional Lives

By Nicole Livas

Imagine going through life not being able to hear some of the most basic sounds such as a loved one's voices, birds chirping, smartphones, and other electronics. Advanced technology is making it possible for deaf and a new documentary highlights some great accomplishments.

The Listening Project (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ww3VvFRJk4&t=16s>) features 15 young adults who were born deaf, but are able to thrive in the medical field, music industry and other careers due to technology and other audiological care. Most of them received cochlear implants as young children, but others did not receive the electronic hearing device until their teen years. In the film, they explain what it was like growing up with hearing loss and the struggles with a hearing disability.

Donna Sorkin is Executive Director of the **American Cochlear Implant Alliance** which is hosting the premiere and partially funded the film. She has a cochlear implant and has been a longtime advocate for the devices. She told Prince George's Suite, "Before cochlear implants, electronic hearing devices, were introduced around 30 years ago, traditional hearing aids could only pick up speech in a muffled tone in quiet settings. As a small business owner, I lost clients because I couldn't talk on the phone. I had to skip theater performances because I couldn't follow the action."

Sorkin said we ALL benefit from the technology because deafness comes with an enormous price tag and cochlear implants all people with hearing disabilities to contribute to society like anyone else. "The most recent estimate puts the cost to society at over \$1 million over the lifetime of a person who is deaf, when you add up the cost of special accommodations and lost work productivity." Sorkin also noted, "Accommodations for workers with hearing impairments can run up to hundreds of dollars per hour. But as the young adults in *The Listening Project* show, people with cochlear implants can lead normal lives without needing expensive and cumbersome accommodations at work."

The documentary by Emmy Award-winning filmmaker **Irene Taylor Brodsky** and pediatric audiologist **Jane R. Madell** premiered March 9 during the **American Cochlear Implant Alliance** conference.



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