

Your Hearing

Protect Your Hearing Now To Keep Listening For Years To Come

(NAPSA)—Preserving your hearing may be easier than you know. If you've ever left a concert with ringing ears, you are most likely one of the millions of Americans exposed to dangerous noise. Approximately 28 million people in the U.S. have some degree of hearing sensitivity, according to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). Of those people, 80 percent have irreversible hearing loss, although many don't like to admit it.

While some people are born with hearing loss, the majority of those affected suffer from exposure to the day-to-day noise that pollutes the environment. People tend to underestimate the vast number of everyday activities that can potentially damage their hearing. According to ASHA, the sounds of a crying baby, running lawn mower, hair dryer, vacuum cleaner, baseball game and street traffic are all things that can exceed the recommended 85 decibels of sound that eardrums can handle for an extended time. The good news is there are easy ways to prevent this problem.

To help, a leading battery maker and ASHA launched a hearing awareness campaign, called the Energizer® EZ Change® "It's Hip to Hear™" program. The program offers a lifestyle brochure and interactive ways to learn about hearing loss.

"We are dedicated to showing consumers that hearing loss prevention doesn't have to take the fun out of life," said Ernie Petrus, director of sales and marketing for Energizer Specialty Batteries, U.S. "We want to turn up the volume on 'responsible listening' in an engaging way that makes the issue relevant to our lifestyles, focusing on music and hot technologies."

As part of the program, the company is also offering hearing-



An innovative "quiet" concert, held at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, kicked off an education campaign to prevent hearing loss called "It's Hip to Hear," by demonstrating safer ways of listening to rock music.

loss prevention tips to help individuals preserve their hearing so they can enjoy music for years to come. These include:

- Be a responsible consumer. Look for a noise rating when buying recreational equipment, children's toys, household appliances and power tools. Choose quieter models, especially for equipment you use often, like a hair dryer. If there is no noise rating, ask the manufacturer for one.

- Limit periods of exposure to noise. It's not just how loud, how long matters, too. Don't sit next to the speakers at concerts, clubs or auditoriums. If you are at a rock concert, walk out for a while to give your ears a break.

- Inspect your child's toys for noise danger just as you do for small parts that can cause choking. Remember, children tend to hold toys close to their ears which can pose additional threat for hearing damage.

- Pump down the volume. When using stereo headsets or lis-

tening to music in the car, turn down the volume. If someone else can hear the music from your headset when standing three feet away, the volume is definitely too high.

- Protect yourself. Wear noise-canceling headphones or ear plugs when exposed to any potentially damaging noise at work, in the community (heavy traffic, concerts, hunting) or at home (mowing the lawn, snow-blowing the driveway).

"The easiest way to guard against future hearing loss is by getting your hearing checked regularly," said Pam Mason, director of Audiology Professional Practices at ASHA. "You should make an effort to get your hearing tested by an audiologist every two to three years, beginning as young as age 30."

For more information on hearing loss prevention or to download a free survival guide, visit the Web site, energizer.com. To find a nearby audiologist, visit asha.org.