

Hawaii Association of the Blind Newsletter

June 1, 2023

Remembering HAB member Michael Salave'a

Some HAB members were able to attend the celebration of life for Michael Salave'a. Mike had many seasons in his lifetime. Here are 10 facts about Mike.

- He took voice lessons.
- Because of his love for the Hip Hop community, he started drawing.
- He was in a rap group in high school
- He was in a car club and Yvette would drive him because he didn't have license yet.
- He was an educational assistant at Farrington High School
- He was a cook at Kam bowl and his job was to stir the oxtail soup till it cooled down without eating it which was a very difficult task because Kam Bowl had the best oxtail.
- He met Yvette at Aiea bowl as he answered the pay phone that was off the hook and she was on the other line.
- He and his brother worked at the carnival

- He was an iron worker

- He was a small business owner of Phatees.

Mike, HAB will miss you.

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Meet Our Member Jolene Cardenas

My name's Jolene Cardenas, and I wanted to join HAB not only to bond with those who share my blindness-related experiences but especially to contribute to their independence and thriving as blind people.

While I'm a member of HAB, I want to use the skills I have to enhance the quality of life not only for myself but especially for the other members.

Although I was born totally blind because of congenital cataracts, I acquired light vision over the years and am now still totally blind in my right eye but legally blind in my left eye.

Thanks be to my father who had raised us six kids up by himself and described to me what everything looked like while I was growing up, I now have an idea of how sighted people see the world around them.

If I could change one thing in the world, it would be how sighted people tend to treat blind people as if they are little children.

My hobbies and interests include composing and playing music, singing, reading, visiting the mall, tech gadgets for the blind, dining out, and going to the beach.

The one thing that could instantly make my day is making others feel good about themselves--especially when they're going through things in life.

During my free time, I enjoy chatting with friends, spending time with my family, listening to music, and relaxing with a good Braille book.

The best decision I've ever made in my life was becoming a born-again Christian.

If money wasn't an issue, I'd visit my cousins in Palm Springs, CA whom I haven't seen for many years and buy myself a new professional keyboard with a top-quality stand-alone microphone for professional music-recording projects.

I can't go a day without God's Word, my iPhone, fresh-perked hot coffee, and enjoying the sunrise.

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A letter from PAY participant Skayboy Sonis

Hi, my name is Skayboy Sonis. I am 12 years old and I go to Kalakaua Middle School. I am a student that will be in the 7th grade. I was born with an eye condition called Peters Anomaly which fogs up my cornea So they took me to California, San Diego to get eye surgery. But after a few weeks it would fog up again.

So we went back to get surgery again but it still happened so we went back to Hawaii. When I got older I got lots of stares from other people but that didn't stop from being just like them. I am now a print reader but before I was a braille reader. I also participated in my middle school track team and got 3rd place on the 4 by 100 meter relay. I was able to win by having a guide run alongside me who was my coach Decker. Most of my teammates were shocked at how I ran and got 3rd place for Kalakaua. My most favorite thing to do is running and playing soccer with my family and brother. I feel like my eyesight makes me feel special and unique in my own way.

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A letter from Lance Kamaka

Dear HAB Members,

I hope this letter finds you well. At the recent HAB meeting held at the library, I had an experience that I would like to share with you all. As a member with both hearing and visual impairments, I found the acoustics at this location to be incredibly echoey, causing me significant difficulty in hearing the discussions and speakers at the meeting.

To address this issue, I brought a small microphone that came with my hearing aids, which helped to reduce the echo and improve my hearing in the space. Unfortunately, a few other members also had trouble hearing, yet didn't have the same solution that I had. One of the members was so affected by the poor acoustics that she expressed she would not return to this site, as it was too painful for her.

Some members suggested that utilizing a PA system might help ameliorate the issue, but as someone who is hard of hearing myself, I believe that amplification alone is not always the best solution. Clarity of speech is just as important to me, as well as to others with hearing loss. It's like tuning in to your favorite radio station and not having it be exactly on the right channel. If you turn the radio up, it only amplifies the sound, but it doesn't make it clearer. Therefore, simply using a PA system in this instance might exacerbate the echo and pain for many members.

I ask you all to consider the challenges faced by members with hearing and visual impairments when selecting HAB meeting venues and encourage you to make proactive choices that will better serve the needs of all members moving forward.

I'd like to take a moment to thank whoever passed the microphone to those who spoke and encourage everyone to continue working together to help make our meetings more accessible and inclusive for all.

Sincerely,

Lance

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A parents thank-you note from the Past PAY STEAM aviation event.

Dear Hawaii Association of the Blind and Parents and Youth (PAY),

Thank you for providing such a wonderful opportunity for Lorenzo.

Lorenzo told me that he was happy he got to go to the Aviation Museum. He said, "It was fun going into the helicopter and feeling the planes." He had an educational class that he enjoyed before going out to feel and touch the airplanes. He said they showed him the pilots' jackets and the airplane models he played with and asked many questions to a guide in class.

Then, he added to say, "Thank you for the spam musubi lunch." He liked the lunch that HAB provided. Ultimately, he said, "Thank you for planning this."

As parents, we do not know how to express our gratitude in words. HAB has provided us great opportunities to meet people with similar conditions to Lorenzo and supportive staff in suitable and safe environments with his needs. Since Lorenzo and I did not have many resources for Lorenzo, when we were introduced to HAB, we were excited about them. Thank you for being there for the people who need support to explore the outside of their world. These precious experiences he had will enhance/expand his growth/future of him and others who have similar conditions.

As the parents of Lorenzo, we wholeheartedly appreciate your support. We will cherish that HAB was so gracious in assisting our special needs son.

Very Sincerely & Much Mahalo,

Yumiko and Dennis

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The Story about your cup of tea

By Terri-lynn Higashi

I was talking to my coworker and she told me who her husband's favorite cashier is the one that is bubbly, friendly, engaging. I told her that good, but that is not for everybody. Some people are drawn to openness, some drawn to more privacy, some even like the overshare. Whoever you are it is ok to enjoy your cup of tea. I am not one to be talking to people all the time it drains the life out of me but for some it gives life and energy. As they say just do you boo... it is all good. Life will always bring all types of people and through time and experience you know what works best for u. Share the love, Share the joy, Share your tea that you were meant to be.

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Through My Father's Eyes

by Jolene Cardenas

Written in loving tribute to Joseph P. Castro - September 3, 1942-June 13, 2004

Having been born totally blind I could not see,
What sighted people saw all around me.
Yet God had blessed me with a gift divine:
The ability to see the world through my father's eyes.

People, places, things and colors
All looking somewhat similar yet different from any other.

The moon and the stars by night and the bright sun by day
And bodies of water and living things created in their own way.

Pictures that revealed more than words could express,
and bedtime stories read before I got some rest.
Wherever he went my father took me with him,
And described everything to me from beginning to end.

Though I was born blind I now can see,
What sighted people can see all around me.
For God still blesses me with this gift divine:
The ability to see the world through my father's eyes.

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What is Active Listening?

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Active listening is a vital skill in any workplace, especially for leaders and managers, whose role has evolved from delegating tasks and organization workloads, to, additionally, coaching employees or others in their organization to help them achieve their full potential. As a result of active listening, you can support your team and members of your organization better, and, ultimately, lead more effectively.

Below we look briefly at what active listening is, before exploring the benefits of this empowering communication skill, a skill that all leaders should seek to develop.

Active listening is a valuable skill in which the listener makes a conscious effort to understand the speaker's entire message. You, as the listener, do this by resisting the impulse to interject with comments or questions every time there is a silence, and also by giving clear signals that you're listening to the speaker, so that they feel you're hearing their message. A range of verbal and non-verbal gestures, such as nods, eye contacts, and simple utterances, make up these gestures.

In the busy environment of a workplace, it's easy to become distracted while someone is talking, either by what's happening around us or by our own thoughts. Active listening is about being present in the conversation and focusing on what the person is saying, and not on how we intend to respond to the other person when they finish speaking.

The benefits of active listening

Active listening is a difficult skill to master. Accomplish this, however, and you empower yourself to become more effective in your role, whether you're a leader or an aspiring leader, or operating in another professional capacity. Below we describe six different benefits of active listening and how they can help you in the workplace.

1. Active listening builds trust and strong relationships

Trust is a major commodity that active listening can help you establish. Consider your team's behaviours. Are they disengaging from what you're saying instead of paying attention to you? Are they absent from work more and more? Do they seem reluctant to share information with you? Do they rely excessively on email?

These are all signs your team may not trust you. These behaviours can damage progress by fuelling resentment and lowering productivity. Your team members may not be feeling heard when they speak to you, in which case learning to listen actively creates the opportunity to re-establish trust and form healthier working relationships with your team.

2. Active listening can help you to resolve conflict

You can be sure of conflict in your workplace. People will misunderstand each other or hold different points of view. Active listening is crucial in these circumstances because often, we only see

issues from our own perspective. Sometimes, we become so deeply entrenched in our own position that we don't even think about it from the other person's (or persons') perspective.

Active listening encourages us to see issues from different viewpoints, recognise other people's feelings, and, generally, appreciate them. Think back to a time in which you disagreed with a colleague, or you witnessed a conflict between two colleagues, in the workplace. Did you see the issue from their perspective? Was this what created the misunderstanding? Active listening forms a basis to hear the other person's message and move forward towards a resolution. It also fosters a culture of respect in the workplace.

3. Active listening prevents you from missing important information

The focus of active listening on hearing the whole message means you're engaged on a higher level with the speaker, which allows you to absorb more specific details from the interaction. If you're receiving instructions or training, you'll be able to recall the details more easily.

As a leader, you're likely to have to train others and convey messages to others, so it's important to remember details because others will be acting upon your words. If you've missed part of the original message, the recipients of your message will only hear parts of the original message, too. This could lead to misunderstandings and impact productivity, the quality of task execution or that of products themselves.

4. Active listening enables you to identify or anticipate problems

Active listening entails seeking clarification to ensure you correctly understand the speaker's message. This creates the opportunity to gauge whether a problem exists, or whether what they're telling you is a sign that a problem could surface, and devise a strategy to address the issue.

Importantly, you're allowing yourself to develop an entire sense of the problem and evaluate all the different aspects, based on the details you hear. This can help you to discover a potentially underlying problem and tackle an issue at its very root, instead of merely curing symptoms and then seeing the problem re-emerge later.

5. Active listening helps you to build more knowledge

Leaders should always embrace learning, and active listening is a powerful skill that supports learning so you can carry your organisation forward. Focusing more intensely makes it possible to assimilate information and understand different topics better, and to then remember more details from what you've learnt.

Active listening is exceptionally useful when you're planning a strategy or organisational change. This could mean applying what you've learned to steer your organisation in a new direction or pursue innovation. When updating yourself on industry trends, you'll be able to take maximum advantage of discoveries. The greater focus will help you to understand the full picture, and, as a result, to analyse more comprehensively how developments could impact your organisation and how you could capitalise on them.

6. Active listening empowers you as a leader

Active listening is empowering, and empowerment builds confidence. By listening actively, you gain an understanding of what will be beneficial in the workplace, which expands your perspective and empowers you. You'll become more aware of what's happening in your workplace, and you'll communicate with superiors and subordinates much better. All of this paves the way for you to lead with confidence.

Active listening is a communication skill that builds trust between you and your colleagues, and that empowers you to make informed decisions, resolve issues, and drive a team or organisation towards success, based on awareness and absorption of all the information necessary to achieve this.

Source: <https://www.inpd.co.uk/blog/benefits-of-active-listening>