



Janice Schacter (top right) networked to push for hearing devices in public places.



## Redbook Hero

Never feel powerless! Just one woman can get the government, corporations—*anyone*—to help right a wrong. This get-it-done mom shows you the way. By Nicole Yorio

**J**anice Schacter vividly remembers the day, 13½ years ago, when her then-2½-year-old daughter, Arielle, was diagnosed with hearing loss. “People would pigeonhole her into what she couldn’t do—that she would never ski, play the piano, or speak a foreign language,” says Janice, 47, from New York City. “I swore I wouldn’t let hearing loss limit her potential.” So

Janice was furious when listening equipment at public places didn’t work as it was supposed to. At plays, for example, the equipment only pumped in instruments or vocals, not both, and video exhibits at museums didn’t provide captions. “It was heart-wrenching to see Arielle’s disappointment because she couldn’t enjoy the experience,” Janice remembers. “I thought, *This makes no sense! There are 36 million people in this country with hearing loss. Why aren’t there better programs available?*”

An idea for a solution hit Janice during a vacation in London back in 2003. That city was equipped for the deaf and hard of hearing in ways she’d never dreamed of. “We saw symbols of ears in taxis, museums, and pharmacies, meaning the locations contained induction loops,” Janice says. The loops transmit sound magnetically to hearing aids with telecoils, making hearing easier. By simply switching to the “T-setting” on her hearing aid, “Arielle could hear the taxi driver, the museum displays—everything! I couldn’t believe we didn’t have this in the United States, especially once I learned that the loops could be installed cheaply and easily,” Janice says.

So she founded the Hearing Access Program and started pushing for change. Now, eight years later, Janice’s program has helped develop hearing programs in dozens of locations, from Yankee Stadium and the Pentagon to national parks around the country. “Whenever I see people using the technology, it gives me chills,” Janice says. “I tell Arielle that there is nothing holding her back, and because she’s seen all that I’ve been able to accomplish, I know she believes it.”

Okay, so how can *you* chip away at a problem or injustice that frustrates you? Take the Janice Schacter approach:

FROM LEFT: GETTY IMAGES; FRED R. CONRAD/THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX; COURTESY OF SUBJECT.



**Know that you don't have to go at it alone.**

"When I was first starting out, I got in touch with various hearing and disability organizations. Learning their history made me more effective: Why reinvent the wheel if someone has already done it? Plus, when organizations work together, we're even more powerful. For

example, once we had induction loops installed in ticket windows in the new New York Yankees and New York Mets stadiums, Minnesota's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services division contacted me to see how we could work with the United Spinal Association to install loops in Target Field, the new Minnesota Twins stadium. Then we all worked together to pass new building codes so that all future stadiums built in the United States will be hearing accessible."

**Start by making the smallest, easiest fixes.**

"I focus on which issues are most important and how they can be solved. I begin by reaching for the low-hanging fruit—the problem that can be easily fixed without a lot of money—and offer simple solutions. For example, in many places where existing devices didn't work properly, it was just a matter of training the staff how to use them correctly and adding signage. I've learned that my small successes make organizations more likely to trust me with bigger projects. They see the benefit and then come back to me and say, 'This is great. What else can we do?'"

**Keep learning.**

"I'm always attending lectures at schools and community centers. You wouldn't believe how many powerful and influential

**Simply introduce yourself, tell people about your cause, and ask if they can help. You will be amazed at how willing most people are to get on board.**



see me walking in the door, and they say, 'Here she is again!'"

**Be assertive.**

"I have no problem walking up to people, introducing myself, and telling them about my cause. I've called the head of Warner Brothers to discuss closed-caption issues on TV and in movies, and the other night I approached Senator Hillary Clinton when I saw her at a benefit! I know not everyone is equally as bold, so I suggest starting by talking to people who speak at lectures, because they expect to be approached. Simply say, 'I want to introduce myself,' and then tell them about your organization and ask if they can help in one way or another. You will be amazed at how willing most people are to get on board."

**Show gratitude.**

"I always send a personal thank-you note to everyone I meet, to tell them how their insight has helped me. I thank assistants who have put me in touch with their bosses at large corporations and those I meet at lectures, workshops, or wherever. Most people underestimate how powerful this is. Everyone wants to feel like they are effecting positive change, and letting them know how much they've helped makes them more responsive going forward." **R**

people speak there. I figure that if I can hear someone talk about, for example, how to speak effectively in public, that's something that will help me in my work. Community centers and issues-based groups such as no limits.org offer free or low-cost workshops that help advocates like me learn new ways to get our messages out there. They



Strawberry Milkshake



Vanilla Milkshake



Ice Creme Sandwich



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