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**HEARING LOSS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA PRESENTS THE NATIONAL ACCESS AWARD TO
THE JOHN F. KENNEDY CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS**

Bethesda, MD - The Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) will present the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts with the prestigious National Access Award during HLAA's Convention 2011 at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City on June 19.

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts is being recognized for its extraordinary efforts to make the performing arts a treasure to be enjoyed by everyone, including people with hearing loss. In the United States there are 36 million people with hearing loss which includes an estimated five million in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. As the nation's premiere performing arts center, the Kennedy Center has led by example, ensuring that performances are accessible through real-time captioning, hearing assistive technology, and sign language interpretation for people with hearing loss.

The Kennedy Center has made performing arts programming available to all people with disabilities including providing large-print and Braille playbills, audio-described performances, and seating that is accessible for people who use wheelchairs. The Kennedy Center has also led the way for other performing arts centers, sharing information that promotes disability access across the country.

"We are grateful to be recognized for our accessibility efforts," said Kennedy Center President Michael M. Kaiser. "It is a priority at the Kennedy Center to make sure performances and facilities are enjoyed by all patrons. Through our accessibility initiatives and VSA, our goal is to provide arts and arts education opportunities for people with disabilities and older adults and increase access to the arts for all."

Six hundred HLAA Convention attendees will have an opportunity to celebrate the range of accessibility at the Kennedy Center at a performance of *Wicked* on June 17. That evening's performance will be made communication accessible through captioning, hearing loop and infrared systems, and sign language interpretation.

"This historic performance shows what can be done to ensure that people with hearing loss can enjoy the arts when appropriate accommodations are in place," said Brenda Battat, executive director of the HLAA.

This off-site event for HLAA Convention attendees is sponsored by Audiotoniq, an innovative hearing device company, and CTIA the Wireless Association®. Ampetronic, an international hearing loop manufacturer is providing and installing a hearing loop in the Kennedy Center's Opera House for the occasion.

Congressional members who champion disability access have been invited to experience the different types of access that their support has made possible for all Americans.

About the Hearing Loss Association of America

The Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA), founded in 1979, opens the world of communication to people with hearing loss through information, education, advocacy and support. HLAA publishes the bimonthly *Hearing Loss Magazine*, holds annual conventions (Convention 2012 is June 21 – 24 in Providence, Rhode Island), produces the national Walk4Hearing™, hosts online learning with the Hearing Loss Academy, holds monthly webinars, and advocates for the rights of people with hearing loss. HLAA has more than 200 chapters and 14 state organizations. The national headquarters is located at 7910 Woodmont Avenue, Suite 1200, Bethesda, MD 20814. Phone: 301.657.2248 or visit www.hearingloss.org.