

A Champion for the Hard of Hearing

Janice Schacter, 44

New York City

A MOTHER'S VOW: A culture lover, Schacter felt her heart sink whenever daughter Arielle—diagnosed with hearing loss at 2½—struggled to understand museum guides and actors onstage, even with hearing aids. “I thought,” she recalls, “things have to change—*now*.”

RELENTLESS: Researching online, she learned that cultural venues could provide better hearing access with relatively cheap technology—such as the induction loop, a coil placed around a room that wirelessly transmits amplified sound to a hearing aid. In 2002 the fast-talking ex-litigator teamed with three advocacy groups to launch the Hearing Access Program (www.agbell.org)—a crusade for 31 million hearing-impaired Americans. Schacter makes her case by phone or in person—buttonholing naysayers is a specialty. “Janice has had a remarkable impact,” says Terry Portis, executive director of the Hearing Loss Association of America.

NOW HEAR THIS: So far, Schacter has persuaded 60 venues—including Graceland, the Kentucky Derby Museum, Manhattan’s Museum of Modern Art and many New York City theaters—to provide assisted-hearing devices. New Yorker Samantha Branner, 11, heard actors in the show *Legally Blonde* “as if they were talking to me.” As for Arielle, now 13, she’s a museumgoer who catches every word. “My mom’s not doing this just for me,” she says. “She’s out to change the world.”

By Richard Jerome



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“Why should there be barriers?” says Schacter (with daughter Arielle).