

Advocating For Less Noise and More Quiet

Published May 11th, 2022

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I learned early in my career that researching and writing about the adverse impacts of noise on hearing and mental and physical health were not enough if I cared about actually reducing noise in our environment. Thus, I became more involved in advocating for lessening environmental noise and enhancing quieter spaces by joining groups with similar interests and working with local communities impacted by noise, especially in urban centers.

In New York City, I serve on the Board of GrowNYC, which supports farmers' markets and recycling efforts, assists communities with their garden projects, promotes programs for children on the importance of a healthier environment, and works with New Yorkers to reduce neighborhood noises. The New York City Mayor chooses Board members, and I have been asked to serve on the Board by five NYC Mayors. Going to GrowNYC's noise site (www.growNYC.org/noise) will allow one to learn about the dangers of noise and how to bring greater quiet to oneself and one's neighbors. Yes, one other thing, you will be informed that should you need personal assistance with a noise problem, you can contact me at GrowNYC. With noise being a major New York City complaint, I will let readers of this article know that I have assisted many New Yorkers with their noise problems, especially neighbor to neighbor noise, and have had many successes in resolving their noise complaints for over thirty years. GrowNYC has served New Yorkers well concerning reducing noise in their lives.

Over the years, groups and organizations have been formed to deal with the growing noise problem

in our world. In New York City, I have assisted local community groups in their efforts to reduce the city's noise. On a larger scale, I have become affiliated with some more national organizations. One of them, Quiet Communities Inc. (<https://quietcommunities.org>), is a non-profit group that aims to work with communities throughout the U.S. to reduce the harmful noises in their environments. The organization has five programs: Quiet American Skies, Quiet Outdoors, Quiet Coalition, Quiet Healthcare, and Quiet Conversation. I am most involved with two of these programs: Quiet American Skies and Quiet Coalition. The Quiet American Skies program works with anti-noise aircraft groups across the United States and assists with their efforts to provide a safer, quieter, and healthier aviation system. The Quiet Coalition is comprised of a group of health, science, and legal professionals concerned about the impacts of noise on health. This group hopes to encourage public officials to study the growing literature on the link between noise and health to move forward in introducing public policies to address the issue of noise pollution and provide for a quieter and healthier environment.

One of the Quiet Coalition projects centers on providing daily blogs that provide news and information on what is happening globally regarding the science of noise and health. Here, you will find blogs that focus on noise and hearing loss. For example, a recent blog by Daniel Fink asked the question, "Is hearing loss an inevitable part of aging." A blog I wrote centered on a missed opportunity to discuss hearing loss in interviews given by Dave Grohl of the Foo Fighters. Jan Mayes wrote a blog on the noise that accompanied the recent Ottawa protest and noted that it might lead to tinnitus in residents subjected to this noise.

Although I had been in contact with Hans Schmid, who founded the Right to Quiet Society, a Canadian organization, largely centered in Vancouver, for many years, I recently joined the Board of Right to Quiet (<https://quiet.org>). This group was established to raise public awareness of the dangers of noise pollution to our health and well-being and to advocate for better legislation and the comparable enforcement of this legislation to reduce noise. As its name indicates, Right to Quiet views quiet as a basic human right. Looking at its website, you can learn more about how its efforts have resulted in less noise in Vancouver. Yet, more work is still to be done, and I am pleased to be part of this organization.

More closely related to noise and hearing has been my association with the Center for Hearing and Communication (CHC) (www.chc.org) in New York City. In 1996, I was especially pleased to join Nancy Nadler, the Deputy Executive Director of CHC, in initiating International Noise Awareness Day (INAD), celebrated on the fourth Wednesday of April. While INAD was a New York City event at its inception, it is now celebrated throughout the United States and globally (<https://noiseawareness.org>). Essentially, the message of INAD is that noise is harmful to hearing, mental and physical health, and our quality of life. INAD promotes educating people about the hazards of noise and laying out ways that each of us can take to lessen noise pollution and enhance quiet.

As an academic, I endorse research, but when it comes to noise, I believe there is sufficient research to link noise to hearing deficits, health issues, and learning loss, allowing legislators to introduce policies to reduce environmental noise pollution. So let me end this article with a quote from Dr. William H. Stewart, a former United States Surgeon General, who said the following in his keynote address to the 1969 Conference on Noise as a Public Health Issue: "In protecting health, absolute proof comes late. Waiting for it is to invite disaster or prolong suffering unnecessarily."