

January 31, 2008

Ms. Julie Hamp  
Senior Vice President  
PepsiCo Communications  
700 Anderson Hill Road  
Purchase, NY 10577

Dear Ms. Hamp,

On behalf of the Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (AG Bell), we are writing in regards to the airing of your upcoming Super Bowl commercial highlighting deaf characters. Established in 1890, AG Bell is the only national organization dedicated to supporting children and adults who are deaf or hard of hearing who use spoken language and hearing technology to communicate in mainstream society.

Although we appreciate Pepsi's efforts to encourage new promotional ideas from your rank-and-file employees and your willingness to celebrate diversity, we would be remiss if we did not call your attention to the fact that your advertisement offers a limited view of the deaf community. Since you have chosen the Super Bowl as the forum to launch this campaign, and because of Pepsi's size and stature, we feel a responsibility to offer our perspective on this somewhat misleading stereotype presented in your advertisement.

We trust you understand that deaf and hard of hearing individuals are a diverse group and therefore do not fit into a single, distinct culture. Your advertisement perpetuates a common myth that all people who are deaf can only communicate using sign language and are, therefore, isolated from the rest of society. In fact, today's hearing technology, coupled with early screening identification and intervention, has led to incredible advances in listening and spoken language skill development. Of the more than 30 million Americans who live with hearing loss, the majority use spoken language as their primary mode of communication.

We would also like to remind you that with the amount of money Pepsi will spend on just one 60 second spot to air during the Super Bowl, you could help an untold number of families obtain hearing aids and other professional services that are costly and in many cases not covered by medical insurance. We would be very willing to work with Pepsi to develop some creative ideas to promote other facets of the deaf community and to highlight positive role models who have met the challenges of this condition and thrived using spoken language. In addition, we invite and encourage your participation at our 2008 convention to be held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, June 27-30; the largest gathering of families with deaf and hard of hearing children in the world.

Your continued involvement in this issue would go a long way to educate the public about this oftentimes invisible condition and promote appreciation for those individuals that go above and beyond to overcome the absence of something many of us take for granted – the miracle of sound.

Sincerely,



Karen Youdelman, Ed.D.  
President



Alexander T. Graham  
Executive Director