

JULY/AUGUST 2018

# hearing life

THE MAGAZINE FOR BETTER HEARING

## There's Strength in Our Numbers— The Power of Chapter Advocacy



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—Margaret Mead



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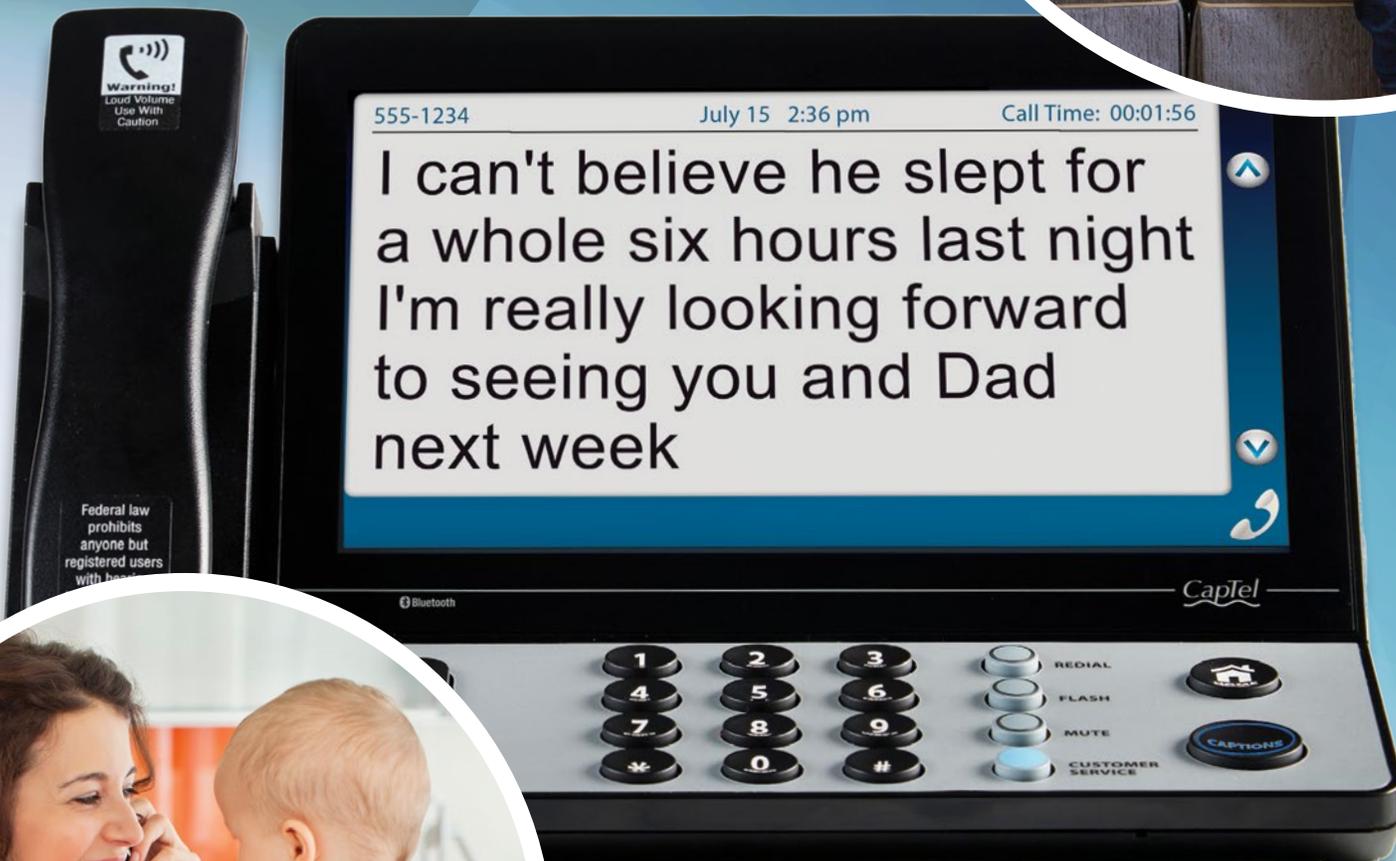
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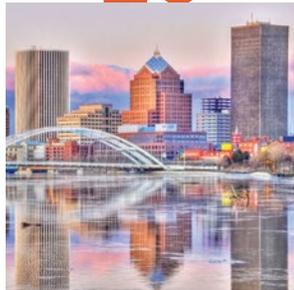
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ABOUT HLAA

Founded in 1979 by Howard E. "Rocky" Stone (1925–2004), the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) is the nation’s foremost membership and advocacy organization for people with hearing loss. HLAA opens the world of communication to people with hearing loss through information, education, support and advocacy.

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# Reckoning Technology with People

BY BARBARA KELLEY

Last year I broke my toe. No big deal; however, when a body part isn't working, it's the first thing you think of in the morning and the last thing on your mind when you lay your head on the pillow at night. And, every hour in between is spent negotiating with that body part and coaxing it along, trying to figure out how to get through the day...and, **have no one notice.**

I love a metaphor, so you know where I am going with this. In no way am I comparing a broken toe to hearing loss. But, really, when you wake up, put on your hearing aids or cochlear implants and charge up the batteries, the two are similar in that we think, "How is it going to work out today?" Then we go out there and negotiate the world.

At the end of the day, we put our heads on the pillow, reflect, and sometimes it's not so good. You might think, "Oh brother, I bluffed in a meeting and gave the wrong response to a question I thought I had heard. I couldn't understand my doctor's instructions because he was looking at the computer screen instead of facing me, or I just retreated to a quiet place where I didn't have to listen, and *I'm tired.*"

than 360,000 people through personal meetings, her blog, and LoopWisconsin.org. The HLAA Get in the Hearing Loop Task Force, made up of HLAA members and volunteers, has advocated for hearing loops across the country. More than 25 people have been trained to teach people how to use hearing assistive technology as part of the Network of Consumer Assistive Technology Trainers (N-CHATT) program funded by a five-year grant.\*



We are working with the wireless industry to create a task force whose goal is to ensure 100 percent hearing aid compatibility with cell phones by 2024, and we are providing expert advice to a nonprofit research company investigating captioned phone standards. We also work with the Consumer Technology Foundation to encourage companies to think about access in the design stage of products, rather than as an afterthought.

With innovation in technology, living in an age where people have an average of 37 apps on their phones and where competition has driven innovation, every day should be a good day for people with hearing loss.

Or, we think, "Whew! I made it. The room where we met had a loop, I went to the movies and they had captioning, I used my captioned phone to make my calls and it was so easy. It was a good day!"

But, shouldn't every day be like that? With innovation in technology, living in an age where people have an average of 37 apps on their phones and where competition has driven innovation, every day should be a good day for people with hearing loss.

HLAA is working to ensure communication access in public places. Since 2008, our HLAA Hearing Loop Advocate Juliëtte Sterkens has reached more

As recently as 20 years ago, who would have ever believed that we could hold our phone, TV and computer in the palms of our hand? We are all part of this living history where technology has transformed the way millions of people live their lives. And, for people with hearing loss, it's no different. Having hearing loss in 1979 when our organization was founded was much different from having hearing loss today.

## Our Mission Is Fully Alive

We hear about all this new technology, but how do we find it, use it and figure out what works in different

HLAA Chapters are made up of people just like you; people who want to learn all they can about their hearing loss, technology, tips, and for some, survival skills.

listening situations? It's one thing to get a hearing aid; it's another to live with them. We dole out advice to people about getting cochlear implants, but it's another thing to make a life-changing and personal decision.

HLAA Chapters are made up of people just like you—people who want to learn all they can about their

hearing loss, technology, tips, and for some, survival skills. Most of all, people come to an HLAA Chapter meeting because it is a place where it is okay to have a hearing loss. People come to share stories, get support, and learn about how they might stay on the job, in school, or enjoy retirement years staying involved with family and friends.

HLAA Chapters are where the mission of HLAA is fully alive: HLAA opens the world of communication to people with hearing loss through information education, support and advocacy. Our chapters are local, volunteer-led organizations that enrich a community along with other community groups such as the Lions Club, Rotary Club, and service groups. HLAA Chapters provide something that no other group in the community can do.

You will realize you can live in harmony with technology and your hearing loss. Even more, you are not alone in trying to do so. Communication—*being engaged*—is what makes life worth living. Thank you to our volunteers who work so hard to make the chapters viable. You can find an HLAA Chapter near you at [hearingloss.org](http://hearingloss.org). **HL**

*Barbara Kelley is executive director of HLAA. She can be reached at [bkelly@hearingloss.org](mailto:bkelly@hearingloss.org) or on Twitter @Bkelley\_HLAA.*

*\*The N-CHAT program is a partnership with Gallaudet University and the American Institutes for Research, and is supported by a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institute on Disability, Independent Living and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR), through Gallaudet University's Deaf/Hard of Hearing Technology Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center (RERC). Grant # 90RE5020.*

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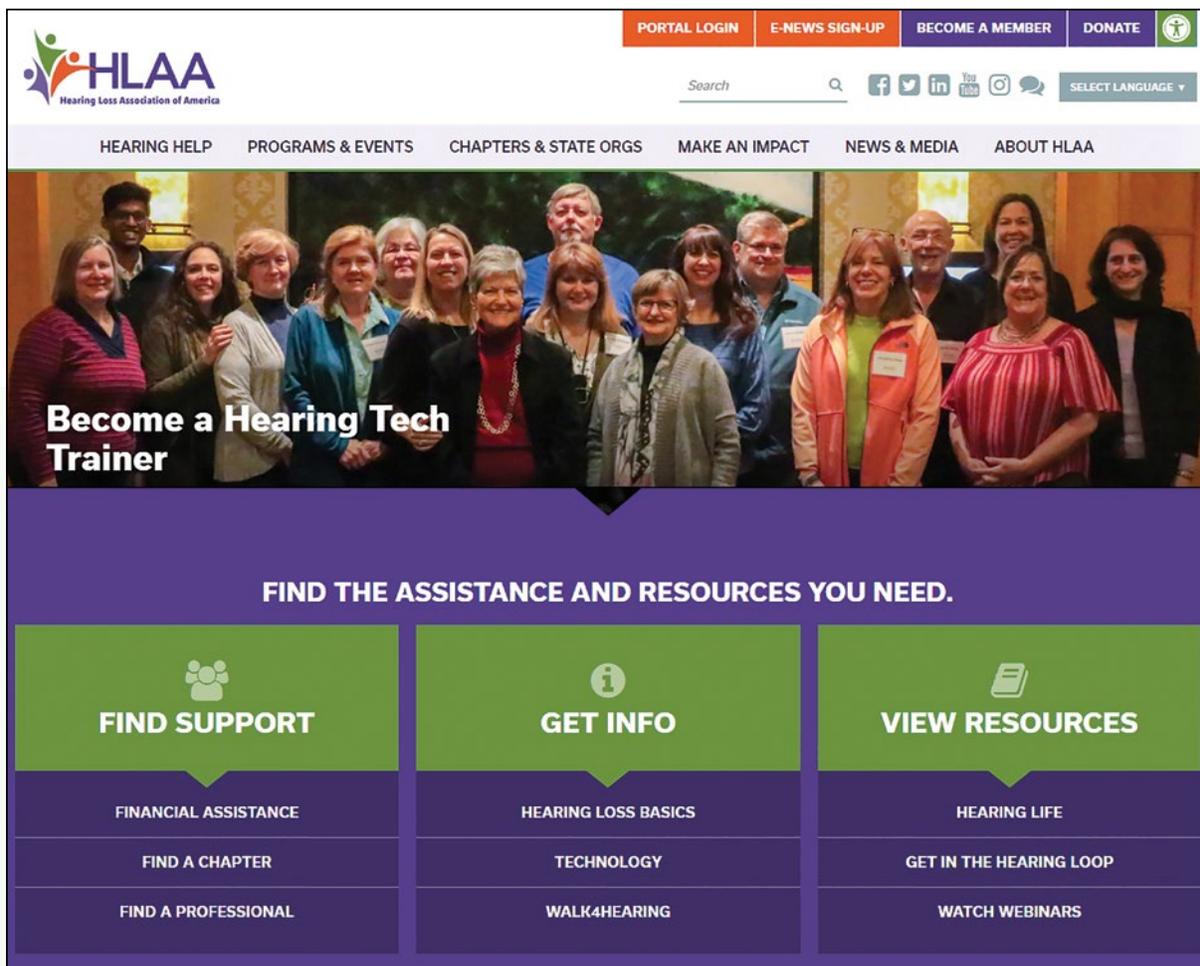
# The Brand New [hearingloss.org](http://hearingloss.org) Is Live!

BY NANCY MACKLIN

May 24 was an exciting day here at HLAA. For it was on that Thursday morning—at 10 a.m. to be exact—that our completely redesigned and updated website, [hearingloss.org](http://hearingloss.org), went live! You'll quickly notice the sleek new look, packed with the information you need to help you on your hearing loss journey. Along with a beautiful design, the new site features improved navigation to help you find what you're looking for quickly and easily. And it's

mobile-friendly—which means you can take us with you wherever you go, no matter what type of device you're using!

With all new accessibility features for those with low vision, and the ability to translate text into 103 languages, anyone, anywhere can reap the benefits of all we have to offer. We've also improved the structure of the content, so you'll get more even if all you have time for is a quick read.



With a new look, added features, easier navigation—and of course packed with information—the new [hearingloss.org](http://hearingloss.org) has something for everyone.

Be sure to visit—and visit often—and don't forget to tell friends, family, loved ones, co-workers, or anyone who might want more information on hearing loss about our new website.

## Navigating the New hearingloss.org

We spent a considerable amount of time working with our web developer, Blackbaud, as well as analyzing results of a navigation survey, to make sure that navigating the site is intuitive and user-friendly. There are literally hundreds of pages of content though, so if you don't immediately find what you are looking for, a robust search feature should lead you to the information you are seeking.

You will also notice an expanded and reorganized section called **Chapters & State Orgs**. This one-stop-shop for all things chapter-related is where you can find an HLAA Chapter near you by scrolling through the complete list, using the custom search feature, or locating it on an interactive map. You can also subscribe to the **Chapter and State Development Blog**, find out how to start an HLAA Chapter, and all the resources you need to run a strong, vibrant chapter.

You are a person with hearing loss—but you may also be an employee, veteran, young adult, student, a patient in a health care setting, or a parent of a child with hearing loss. We have gathered relevant information for each of these **Communities** located in the **Hearing Help** section.

The calendar on the main page is quickly filling up with events across the country, Walk4Hearing dates, webinars, technology expos and more. Check it out for an event near you.

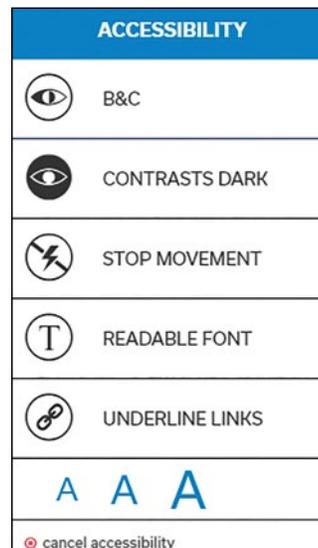
One page in particular that I really like is called **What's Your Story** (under **Make an Impact**). This is where you have the opportunity to tell the world how HLAA has impacted your life with hearing loss, whether by participating in the Walk4Hearing, attending a chapter meeting, or reading about the latest technology in *Hearing Life*. If you would like to share your story (include a photo if you like), email Dave Hutcheson at [magazine@hearingloss.org](mailto:magazine@hearingloss.org) and we will publish it on the website.

As excited as we are to have the launch under our belts, the website is a continual work in progress as we add new content and enhance the user experience. Thanks to a grant from the Consumer Technology Association Foundation we will soon be producing new videos about technology and its use by retirees, employees, and patients. Be sure to visit—and visit often—and don't forget to tell friends, family, loved ones, co-workers, or anyone who might want more information on hearing loss about our new website.

## Feedback Welcome

Dive into the new website this summer and let us know how you like it. Just email [webmaster@hearingloss.org](mailto:webmaster@hearingloss.org) with comments, questions, and suggestions. **HL**

*Nancy Macklin is director of external affairs at HLAA. She can be reached at [nmacklin@hearingloss.org](mailto:nmacklin@hearingloss.org) or 301.657.2248.*



The new website is mobile-friendly, has the latest accessibility features and can be translated into 103 languages so anyone, anywhere can visit it—at any time!

## A Special Shout-out to CaptionCall!

HLAA owes a big debt of gratitude to our friends at CaptionCall. Without their generosity and support our new website would not have been possible. Thank you CaptionCall!





# There's Strength in Our Numbers— The Power of Chapter Advocacy

BY LISE HAMLIN AND ERIN MIRANTE

Advocacy is “the act or process of supporting a cause or proposal,” so Merriam-Webster says. Those of us with hearing loss know that at times we are each our own “cause” and the only one advocating for better access for ourselves. Self-advocacy, or as HLAA Founder Rocky Stone called it, “self-help,” has been part of our mission from the start. In fact, the original name of the organization was Self Help for Hard of Hearing People, or SHHH.

However, “self” does not necessarily mean alone. Rocky created the organization based on the belief that people could live more successfully with hearing loss if

they reached out and shared their experiences with other people with hearing loss. Self-help began with mutual support and understanding.

Rocky also firmly believed that the way to do this was through being involved in a chapter. In his column for the March/April 1981 issue of the *SHHH Journal* (the predecessor to *Hearing Life*), Rocky wrote, “Hope flourishes in community, not isolation. That is why the concept of chapters at the local level is so important.”

One of our mantras here at HLAA is, “You don’t have to face hearing loss alone.” This also means you

don't have to *advocate* for hearing loss alone. Sometimes, you have an HLAA Chapter standing by your side.

Hearing loss is not always easy for others to understand, nor is it easy to explain, especially when we can hear fine in some situations but not in others. How do you explain that we can have a one-on-one conversation in a quiet room with no problem, but if you turn on the music or water in the kitchen sink we are lost?

One teacher wrote to us recently saying he has trouble hearing a student in class if another is tapping his pencil on the desk nearby. Trying to explain that to his boss was no easy task. His boss just didn't understand how someone with hearing loss has a hard time filtering out background noise and distinguishing it from what he is trying to hear a student say. That teacher went so far as to go to an attorney, but the attorney didn't have a clue what the teacher's rights were. And neither knew what accommodations were available.

Then he found HLAA. We can help. That's why we are here.

People with hearing loss face barriers to communication every day. But our self-help movement has given us a platform for advocacy to work from and others to work with. We have wonderful advocates in chapters around the country fighting for equal access for people with hearing loss. Sometimes change takes years, making progress one step at a time; other times there are quick, rousing successes. Often, we find that success builds on success, and more people join our ranks when they see that advocacy works.

In the following stories you'll learn how advocates from chapters in New York City, Central Virginia, Oklahoma City, and Washington, D.C. used self-advocacy, community outreach—and in some cases—working with local legislators to accomplish their goals. While each story may be different, they all have one thing in common: no one did it alone.

These are just a few chapter success stories, and we want to give them a well-deserved round of applause for their hard work. But we also want you to take heart and see that advocacy works, even if it's through the efforts of just a small group of committed people.

## A Small Group of Passionate HLAA New York City Chapter Members Take on the Big Apple

*Submitted by Jerry Bergman, HLAA New York City Chapter*

New York City became the nation's first major municipality to require the installation of hearing loop systems in new construction and renovation projects paid for with city funds when Local Law 51 took effect



New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio (seated) at the signing of Local Law 51 with (l to r) Council Member Helen Rosenthal, HLAA New York City Chapter President Katherine Bouton, Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD) Deputy Commissioner Kleo King, and HLAA New York City Chapter Member and accessibility advocate Jerry Bergman.

# Reasons for Joining an HLAA Chapter—Where It's Okay Not to Hear Well

*HLAA Chapter meetings are a powerful resource to help you live successfully with hearing loss.*



**Education**—The expert and experienced speakers at chapter meetings will teach you how to best manage your hearing loss and improve your listening skills to live a more active lifestyle.

**Support**—Through the experiences of other members, you will learn how to get the best treatment, as well as the latest techniques that can improve your listening beyond what a hearing aid or cochlear implant alone can offer.

**Advocacy**—We help you understand your legal rights and how to advocate for them.

**Mentoring**—Hearing loss affects everyone including family, friends and co-workers, and we invite you to bring your loved ones to meetings.

**Latest Technologies**—You will learn about the latest developments in hearing aids, implantable devices, hearing assistive technology (HAT), communication access in your community, smartphone apps and much more that can enhance your hearing.

**Access to the Community**—Learn about movie theaters and other venues in your community that offer captioning systems and other forms of hearing assistive technology.

**Social Connections**—At an HLAA Chapter, you will meet many others like yourself, whether you have hearing loss or are supporting someone with one. You don't have to face hearing loss alone.

**Access to Other Resources**—We are your gateway to many resources, such as how to manage the cost of hearing aids, your state's telecommunications relay phone program (some which offer free amplified and captioned phones), and more.

**Self-help**—At HLAA, we learn to advocate for ourselves at home, work and in the community, by mastering the simple tools that can help guide people we encounter to help meet our communication needs.

**Staying Tuned In**—New technological advances in hearing devices, treatment procedures, support tools, preventive and curative developments are occurring at a more rapid rate than ever before. HLAA and your local HLAA Chapter remain your best source to keep pace, so you can continue to get the most out of your hearing.

For more information on HLAA Chapters—including where to find one near you, visit [hearingloss.org/chapters-state-orgs](https://hearingloss.org/chapters-state-orgs).

July 1, 2017. But the story of how the HLAA New York City Chapter helped make it happen goes back to 2014.

While Mayor Bill de Blasio is New York's most visible leader, the City Council is its legislative body. I wasn't active in local politics and did not know Helen Rosenthal, my district's council member. But shortly after she was elected to her first term in 2013, I contacted Helen's office to set up a meeting to discuss hearing accessibility. I brought a chapter colleague with me to the meeting and set up a portable hearing loop—not just for us to hear better, but also to demonstrate the technology.

Council Member Rosenthal appreciated how many constituents in her district were affected by hearing loss and understood how a lack of accessibility discourages active lifestyles. After experiencing our hearing loop firsthand, she became an enthusiastic proponent.

Helen's staff asked, "What would you like to see changed?" Our dialogue over the next six months led to three bills. The key bill would mandate the installation of hearing loop systems in new city construction and renovation projects; the second one would require that a staff person from each city agency be designated as an ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) liaison; and the third would require accessibility notices in city meeting announcements.

The following summer, when the three bills were voted out of the council's Committee on Mental Health, Disability and Addiction, the New York City Chapter, along with other voices in the local disability community, took part in a press conference outside City Hall. In her remarks, Council Member Rosenthal pointed to a hearing loop installed and the CART (Communication Access Realtime Translation) service that was provided for the event.

In October 2015, several of us testified at a council hearing on the bills. The ones calling for an ADA liaison and accessibility notices, being revenue neutral, were passed and signed into law in the ensuing months.

Local Law 51, however, was extensively debated over the next year as it was estimated that it would add several million dollars to the city's annual construction costs. But, as Helen recently explained, "My credibility as a former city finance official, combined with favors I had accumulated from fellow council members, enabled us to get the bill passed."

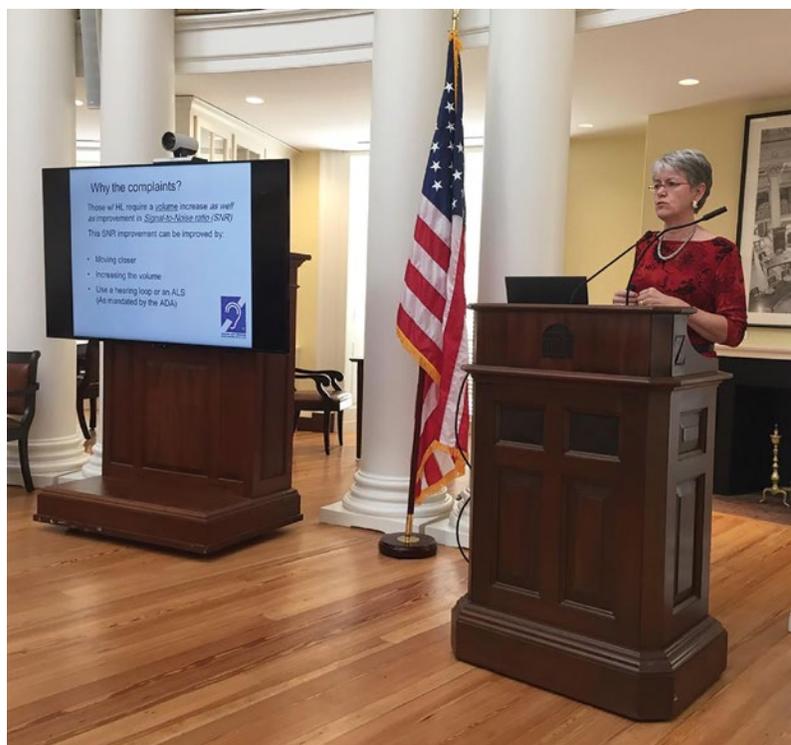
Mayor de Blasio signed Local Law 51 into effect on June 21, 2017—an historic day for hearing accessibility in the Big Apple.

## The HLAA Central Virginia Chapter Gets an "A" for Their Advocacy Efforts

*Submitted by Larry Herbert, HLAA Greater Richmond Chapter and previous member of the HLAA Central Virginia Chapter*

I was introduced to hearing loops, as well as CART and ASL (American Sign Language), at the first meeting I attended of the HLAA Central Virginia Chapter in Charlottesville more than fifteen years ago. I was impressed to say the least. So much so in fact that I quickly became involved in their advocacy efforts to spread the word about hearing loops. There are now at least 12 churches in the community who have installed hearing loop systems in their sanctuaries, and the list continues to grow.

But one advocacy effort in particular—and our proudest achievement—took a little longer to bear fruit. Several members of our chapter met with administrators



HLAA Hearing Loop Advocate Dr. Juliëtte Sterkens was honored to be the keynote speaker at the dedication ceremony for the new hearing loop system in the University of Virginia's historic Rotunda.



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at the University of Virginia and encouraged them to incorporate hearing loop systems into some of the facilities there. Interest was expressed by staff in attendance, and even though a lot of inertia followed, a seed was planted.

Five or six years after that initial meeting I received a telephone call from the contractor who was doing a major renovation of the Rotunda, a National Historic Landmark and the signature building at the university Thomas Jefferson founded in 1819. As part of the renovation school officials wanted to install a hearing loop system in its famous Dome Room, along with eight other classrooms and meeting spaces. I immediately put them in touch with a contractor who would do the installation.

All the hard work paid off, and now the Rotunda is accessible to people with hearing loss. A dedication ceremony was held in the fall of 2016, with none other than HLAA Hearing Loop Advocate Juliëtte Sterkens giving the keynote speech.

In addition to this successful effort, several members of the chapter also met with officials from the university's athletic department to encourage them to place caption boards at both the basketball arena and the football stadium, and those advocacy efforts came to fruition several years later as well.

None of this would have happened without the active presence of the HLAA Central Virginia Chapter. We reached out to community and university leaders about assistive listening technology and inclusivity for people with hearing loss. We have also spoken at civic clubs, held a hearing loop demonstration at a locally-

based national electronics firm, invited local audiologists and dispensers to join our efforts, and received media coverage of some of the local installations, which brought even greater awareness.

So I give a tip of the hat to all the HLAA Chapter members whose advocacy efforts helped improve the quality of life for people with hearing loss in Central Virginia.

## Have You HEARD About Oklahoma?

*Submitted by Ron Hendricks, HLAA Central Oklahoma Chapter*

Another banner year is underway at the HLAA Central Oklahoma Chapter. We will begin our 28th year this fall, and as one of the older HLAA chapters, we are able to use our rich history to increase awareness and improve accessibility for people with hearing loss throughout Oklahoma. Our chapter works hard to fulfill HLAA's mission in a variety of ways. We participate in community outreach events such as health fairs and conferences, travel across the state giving presentations, and our members dedicate countless hours raising awareness of hearing loss, sharing valuable resources, and promoting the benefits of joining our chapter.

We are very proud of our Faye Donalson Hearing Helper's Demonstration Room (HHR). The HHR is operated entirely by volunteers and is open every

Thanks to an effort led by HLAA Central Oklahoma Chapter member Ana Covey, the 2,700-seat Oklahoma City Civic Center is now equipped with a hearing loop system.



weekday throughout the year. It was developed based on the concept of “try it before you buy it” since hearing devices are so expensive. Faye Donalson, the founder of the HLAA Central Oklahoma Chapter and the HHR, conceived the idea. She wanted people to make informed decisions by providing information about the types of assistive listening devices available in addition to the hearing aids or cochlear implants—not in place of one.

The HHR has more than 150 devices on display that people can try. Given that the demonstration room started with only five devices it speaks volumes about its success!

We have many assistive listening devices—alarm clocks, bed shakers, smoke alarms, telephones, and more. Everything is functional, can be demonstrated, and even available to be taken home for a test run. Although we do not sell the items we have purchasing information available. The demonstrations and information are always free.

The chapter is also actively working with one of our members, Ana Covey, to install hearing loop systems throughout Oklahoma. The initiative encourages people with hearing loss to speak to their

audiologists about hearing loops and telecoils, ask their favorite venues to consider installing a hearing loop

People can live more successfully with hearing loss if they reach out and share their experiences with other people with hearing loss. Self-help begins with mutual support and understanding.

—HLAA Founder Rocky Stone

## Join Us in Welcoming Kiersten Valko to the HLAA Family!

Please give a warm welcome to Kiersten Valko, who joined HLAA on June 11 as the Walk4Hearing program assistant. Kiersten will work closely with National Walk4Hearing Managers Ronnie Adler and Ann Rancourt. In her role Kiersten will be assisting with all aspects of the Walk4Hearing program, including managing the Walk database, marketing and outreach efforts, volunteer support, Walk logistics, and most importantly, helping our walkers in any way she can.

With a strong desire to work on an impactful platform, Kiersten will fit in perfectly with the rest of our passionate team. She said she is looking forward to working with the volunteers and walkers as they gear up for Walk day as it allows her to have a hands-on and interactive approach to helping those with hearing loss.

Kiersten graduated from Radford University in Virginia with bachelor's degrees in political science and philosophy and religious studies. In her free time she loves to read, hike, and gather for group dinners with her close friends.

You can reach Kiersten at [kvalko@hearingloss.org](mailto:kvalko@hearingloss.org).



system, reach out to elected officials for better access, and of course, join HLAA. Ana works with a private company, Assist2Hear, Inc., and is passionate about improving access in her home state.

“Oklahoma is quickly becoming a hearing-friendly city because our chapter members are speaking up for themselves,” said Ana. “Hearing loops are the perfect solution for better communication in large buildings such as churches and auditoriums, but also in smaller environments like pharmacies, banks and hospitals.”

Ana and her team were responsible for successfully installing a large hearing loop system in the Oklahoma City Civic Center Music Hall, looping the 2,700-seat main theater as well as the concession stands and box office.

“Our new hearing loop system welcomes people with hearing aids and cochlear implants back to the Civic Center,” said Interim Civic Center Manager John Siska. “People who use a hearing device can now hear the performance as well as, if not better than, the person seated next to them, with no additional equipment.”

The project has encouraged other companies throughout the state to re-evaluate their own hearing access. In fact, Ana just completed the installation of a hearing loop system in the newly renovated Rodeo Theater in Stockyards City, which is also the home of the Oklahoma Opry. The theater will show independent, foreign films and more.

The HLAA Central Oklahoma Chapter has worked tirelessly to promote the initiative through letter writing, providing support to the venue before and after the project, applauding the venue for inclusion, and even sharing their experience with the media. “Our members really made a difference through self-advocacy,” said Covey. We also participated in a hearing loop ribbon cutting ceremony which included local dignitaries. Ana and Assist2Hear have also installed loops in the Church of St. Mary in Tulsa and the Council Chambers of the City of Nichols Hills.

Chapter Board member Nancy Landrum explains, “I think it is imperative for Oklahoma to embrace the hearing loop movement. Installing a hearing loop system demonstrates how government, businesses, churches, and other organizations and venues care enough about people with hearing loss to provide a comfortable, efficient, and discreet way to accommodate their needs. Showing empathy for the people they serve is not only good for business, it is the right thing to do.”

The HLAA Central Oklahoma Chapter hopes to be an example for self-advocacy and a leader in gaining better access for nationwide so people can live better with hearing loss.

## A One-man Show Brings Open Captioning to D.C. Movie Theaters

*Submitted by Erik Nordlof, HLAA District of Columbia Chapter and founder of DC Deaf Moviegoers*

As someone with a profound hearing loss who loves going to the movies, I have been frustrated with the problems that I—and many others—have experienced with closed captioning devices. This spurred me to explore the possibility of having more local movie theaters offer open captioned screenings.

In 2015, I started a group called DC Deaf Moviegoers, with the goal being to advocate and share information about open captioned movie screenings in the Washington, D.C. area. I routinely correspond with the general managers of several cinemas, and using information I get from surveys, make requests based on moviegoers’ preferences. There are also several cinemas that offer open captioned movies already, and we share information about those screenings too. Our Facebook group has more than 2,000 members and our mailing list has over 850 people.

Open captioned movies are already available from the “Big Six” studios (Walt Disney Studios, Warner Brothers Entertainment, NBCUniversal, Fox Entertainment Group, Sony Pictures and Viacom), as well as many smaller distributors, but it is up to the movie theater itself whether or not they turn them on. We try to encourage movie theaters to offer open captioned screenings based on the interest of a large group, such as one with more people than assistive devices.

Regal Cinemas is worth noting as they have a formal open captioning policy. The theater will offer an open captioned screening of a movie if more than ten people are interested and they provide a week’s notice.

We have been happy to request screenings on behalf of



Erik received the Hamilton Relay 2016 Better Hearing and Speech Month Recognition Award for the District of Columbia for his advocacy work with DC Deaf Moviegoers.

several local organizations, including “Avengers: Infinity War” for a teen event hosted by the HLAA District of Columbia Chapter.

While it might take some persuading to encourage a movie theater to offer open captioned screenings, a little self-advocacy can go a long way. It helps to have a sizeable deaf and hard of hearing community where you live, but many hearing moviegoers can appreciate open captions too, so invite relatives and friends as allies to support this initiative.

In 2016, Hawaii set the precedent for others to follow when they became the first state in the nation to require open captioned screenings statewide. The law stipulated that movie theaters must offer two open captioned screenings for each movie per week.

Advocating for more open captioned movies in your local community can help bring people together by giving them a more accessible experience and allowing them to take part in conversations about the movies with family and friends.

If you would like to talk more about how to advocate for open captioned movies, please feel free to contact me, Erik Nordlof, at [dc.deaf.moviegoers@gmail.com](mailto:dc.deaf.moviegoers@gmail.com). You can also find us on Facebook at [facebook.com/groups/dcdeafmoviegoers](https://www.facebook.com/groups/dcdeafmoviegoers). **HL**



*Lise Hamlin is director of public policy at HLAA and can be reached at [lhamlin@hearingloss.org](mailto:lhamlin@hearingloss.org).*



*Erin Mirante is the HLAA national chapter coordinator. She can be reached at [emirante@hearingloss.org](mailto:emirante@hearingloss.org).*

## Do You Need Help Beyond Your Hearing Aid or Cochlear Implant?

Use of hearing assistive technology (HAT) is one important way for consumers to live better with hearing loss. However, there is a substantial lack of understanding about available technological solutions.

HAT includes assistive listening systems (such as FM, hearing loop systems, and infrared), telecommunications products and services (such as captioned telephones and relay services) and alerting devices (such as alarm clocks and smoke detectors that use loud audio alerts, vibrating receivers and/or flashing lights). There are also equipment distribution programs, state assistive technology programs and other helpful resources that can be beneficial.

The HLAA national office receives many inquiries about HAT, yet has no hearing assistive technology expert on staff available to field those calls. In response to this need, HLAA has created a new service called HAT HELP. Supervised doctoral level audiology students from the University of Washington and Gallaudet University are now available to answer your technical assistance questions. Simply write to [hat\\_help@hearingloss.org](mailto:hat_help@hearingloss.org) and you will receive an email response to your question.

# Save the Date!

BY NIAZ SIASI

## HLAA2019 Convention

June 20–June 23

Rochester, New York

Hyatt Regency Rochester

Rochester Riverside Convention Center



PHOTO CREDIT JIM MONTANUS

Join us for a vacation to remember where you will meet other people with hearing loss, learn in the most communication accessible environment and enjoy the sights and sounds of Rochester—a world of art, theater, music, photography, history, nature and play!

### This Just In...

We are thrilled to announce that our keynote speaker for HLAA2019 has been confirmed!

**Rebecca Alexander** is an author, psychotherapist, disability rights advocate, group fitness instructor and extreme athlete. Born with a rare genetic disorder called Usher syndrome type III, Rebecca has been simultaneously losing both her sight and hearing since she was a teenager. She was told that by age 30 she'd be completely blind. Then, at 19, one year after a fall from a second-story window left her athletic body completely shattered, she discovered she would lose her hearing as well. Despite these difficulties, Rebecca refused to lose her drive and zest for life and rose above and beyond every challenge she has faced.



Now, with only 10 degrees of vision and significantly deteriorated hearing, Rebecca is a flourishing full-time psychotherapist with two master's degrees from Columbia University in public health and clinical social work. Rebecca received post-graduate training at the Institute for Contemporary Psychotherapy at the Center for the Study of Anorexia and Bulimia and her psychodynamic psychotherapy training from the American Institute for Psychoanalysis. Rebecca is also certified in EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing) and is fluent in American Sign

Language and Tactile Sign Language. Rebecca works with individuals, couples, and families, specializing in the treatment of anxiety, depression, addiction, grief, loss, and disability.

She is also an athlete who teaches indoor cycling, HIIT (high intensity interval training) classes, and regularly competes in extreme endurance races. Most notably, she climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro, swam from Alcatraz to shore in the San Francisco Bay, participated in the 600-mile San Francisco to Los Angeles AIDS Lifecycle ride, and regularly competes in the Civilian Military Combine (CMC) for extreme athletes.

Additionally, Rebecca travels around the country on a regular basis, speaking at corporate and nonprofit events across the globe. Rebecca has been featured in an array of media outlets including *The Today Show*, *NBC Nightly News*, *Morning Joe*, *The Daily Rundown*, *One-On-One with Steve Adubato*, *Megyn Kelly TODAY*, *The Dr Oz Show*, *The Meredith Vieira Show*, *The New York Times*, *Huffington Post*, *New York Post*, *USA Today*, *ABC News*, *NBC News*, *Fox News*, *ESPN*, *People*, *Shape Magazine*, *Fitness Magazine*, *Women's Health Magazine*, *Marie Claire*, *Glamour magazine*, *Glamour UK*, *Cosmopolitan*, *The Daily Mail*, *Mercury News* and various others. Rebecca has been honored with numerous awards including the American Foundation for the Blind *Helen Keller Achievement Award*, The Disability Rights Advocates' *Eagle Award*, NO LIMITS for Deaf Children *Spirit of Leadership Award*, and the University of Michigan's *Bicentennial Award*.

We can't wait to hear Rebecca talk about her inspiring journey. You can find more information about Rebecca on her website at [rebalexander.com](http://rebalexander.com). As if you needed another reason to join us at the HLAA2019 Convention! **HL**

*Niaz Siasi is the HLAA meeting planner. She can be reached at [nsiasi@hearingloss.org](mailto:nsiasi@hearingloss.org).*



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# Adapt and Change—Strategies and Tactics for Attracting New Members to Your Chapter

BY KATY KUCZEK

**In the state of Missouri, there are approximately 600,000 people living with hearing loss**, according to the Missouri Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Kathy Patrick, chairperson of the HLAA Greater St. Louis Chapter, is painfully aware of the discrepancy between this statistic and the 25 dues-paying members registered in her database. Attracting new members—and retaining them as future advocates and dedicated volunteers—is a daunting task. Passionate leadership can only go so far.

Kathy embodies the same tireless energy and commitment to inclusion of people with hearing loss that most chapter leaders effuse. It's commendable but cannot likely be sustained long-term. Joan Kleinrock, professional chapter development advisor for HLAA, worries about their eventual burnout. Her advice is to start recruiting “the next generation of leaders.”

Among the obstacles to expanding chapter membership are a limited budget, lack of marketing expertise, and the absence of the tech savviness that your average millennial takes for granted. A younger generation that grew up with the ubiquitous internet cloud and Wi-Fi at their disposal has a better understanding of the power of the internet and social media, knows how to harness this technology and use it to influence.

Erin Mirante, HLAA national chapter coordinator, told me, “Chapters offer so many services that we can't from the HLAA national office. It is becoming

increasingly important—especially as technology continues to develop—that chapters are able to communicate their benefits of membership in a way that will draw new members in and keep them interested.”

Kathy lamented that she is “at a loss for getting the word out,” but admitted that nothing new had been posted to their chapter website and the chapter Facebook page is not active. She's only one person and realizes she needs help.

For many chapters, the frustration with effective outreach is a familiar story. HLAA recognizes this struggle and has been busy making great strides to lay the groundwork for future marketing initiatives.

## Communication is Key

Erin asked me to write about my experience working with my local chapter, the HLAA Rochester Chapter. In my parental role, I am a mother to a college-age daughter who was born with asymmetrical sensorineural hearing loss. In my professional role as a graphic

designer, I was hired (along with my strategic writing/public relations partner) to create a communications plan for the chapter.

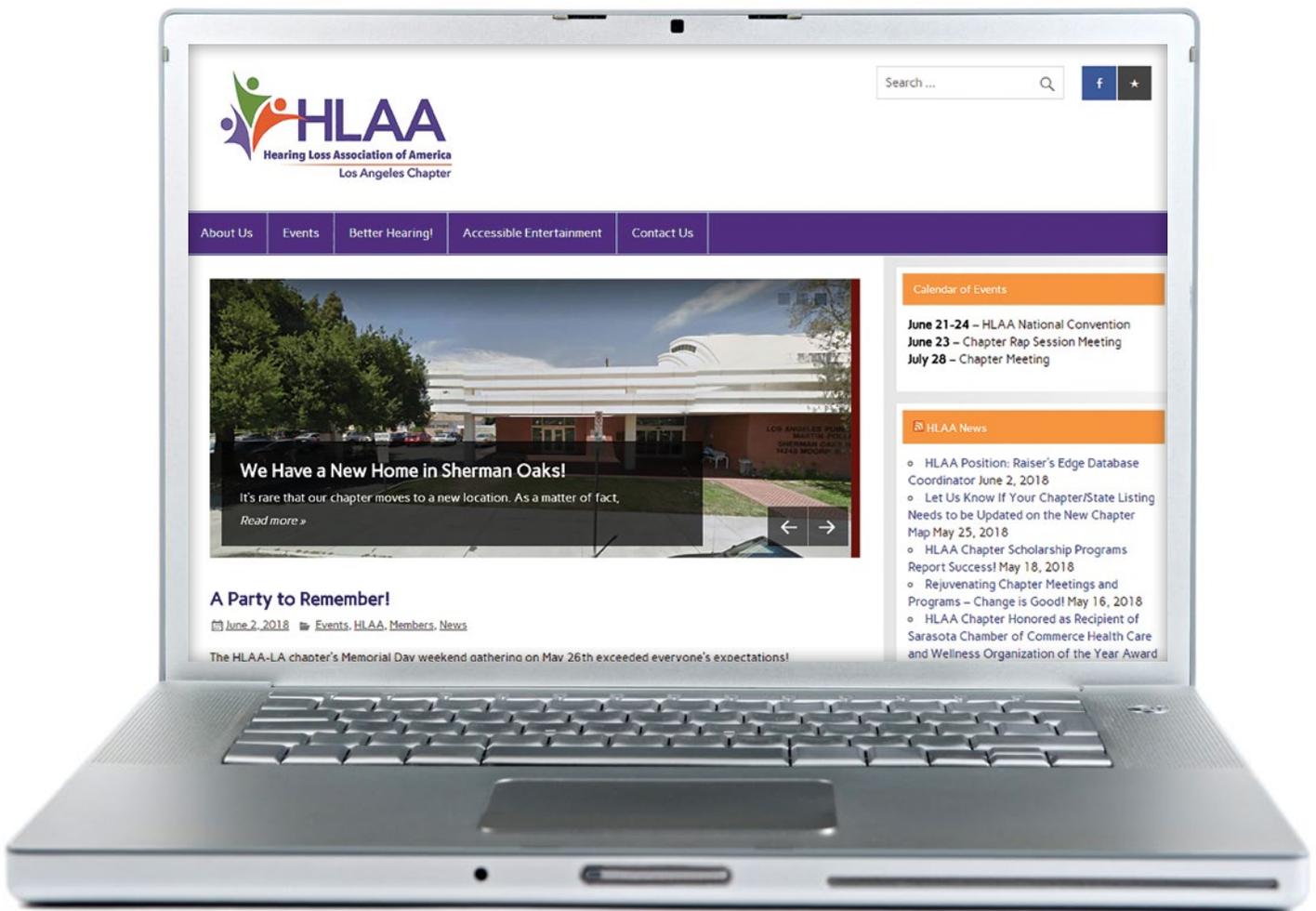
We met with a core group of chapter board and marketing committee members in an informal focus group setting, prepared with a list of targeted questions and a whiteboard to record the range of answers. The chapter's current situation was detailed (number of members, related facts and statistics, outreach efforts, etc.), along with its audiences, key messages, obstacles and objectives.

Key messages are critical to any marketing outreach as you want to be consistent in what you're communicating to your audiences.

We organized and distilled this input to develop a multi-page plan to serve as a guide the chapter could refer to when considering future marketing endeavors.

It's obvious that the primary audience for your chapter is anyone with hearing loss; a secondary audience is the friends and families of those people with hearing loss; and a tertiary audience would include audiologists or anyone else working with people who have hearing loss. It's

important to identify your various audiences, as different strategies and tactics are associated with each.



Visit the award-winning HLAA Los Angeles Chapter website at [hlaa-la.org](http://hlaa-la.org).

Key messages are critical to any marketing outreach as you want to be consistent in what you're communicating to your audiences. For Rochester, the central message



Tim Browning, HLAA Los Angeles Chapter secretary, webmaster and recipient of the 2018 Best Chapter Website award at the HLAA2018 Convention.

was, "You are not alone in your hearing loss." The chapter serves a dual purpose of bringing together people with hearing loss in a social setting "where it's okay not to hear well," as chapter president Margaret Cochran likes to say, and taking an active role in advocating for greater access in public venues.

Objectives or goals may seem self-evident—to attract new members and increase your volunteer base. For the Rochester chapter, other objectives included driving

overall awareness of the chapter and all its offerings, increasing awareness of loops and open captioning in the community, promoting their new demo center for assistive listening devices (ALDs), and recruiting the next generation of volunteers.

## Taking Action

The majority of the work that goes into a cohesive communications plan lies in the creative development of strategies and tactics. It's important to differentiate a strategy from a tactic. A strategy defines what you want to do—like improve your chapter website, use social media to connect with members, or promote the existence of ALDs at local venues. Tactics are the more tangible steps you're going to take to achieve your goals.

The number one strategy we proposed was to improve the chapter website as a communications tool. The tactics that we outlined to support this strategy included: organize and minimize the high volume of material currently on the site for easier navigation, create a set of visual banners on the homepage depicting the diversity of people with hearing loss and highlighting important local and national events, rebuild the site in WordPress to respond to mobile devices and to allow for easier updates in the future, establish a "Find an Audiologist" feature on the homepage, provide an interactive calendar of events, a newsletter signup button, and links to social media.

Other proposed strategies and tactics included utilizing social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube,

etc.) to connect the local hearing loss community, leveraging the talent of a teen group to increase younger membership (using Instagram and YouTube to post relevant content and videos), leveraging the audiologist community to spread awareness (through brochures, links to website and feature stories in the newsletter) and capitalizing on the new demo center through public relations/media opportunities and advertising (print and digital).

Some of the tactics had costs associated with them that were cost-prohibitive for the chapter, but others only required a time investment.

## The Value of a Chapter Website

Few chapter members understand the value of a well-conceived and constructed website better than HLAA Los Angeles Chapter webmaster Tim Browning. You may recognize Tim's name as he was honored at HLAA2018 Convention recently for best chapter website!

When Tim joined the chapter in 2013, a screenshot of their newsletter served as the website. He quickly saw an opportunity to use his technology background to modernize their web presence. The process took close to two years but proved well worth the time and effort of everyone involved.

Tim's goal was to present the chapter as multigenerational, to reach both the current audience and attract a younger one. Tim said, "The biggest challenge in creating an effective website is managing the content." Once a website has been launched, it's important to keep the site relevant with new content on a continual basis.

Tim takes that thought one step further by predicting that in the future support may have a multimedia focus. He thinks there will always be a place for meetings, but a new generation may be more comfortable chatting online or through video interaction. His mantra moving forward is "adapt and change." **HL**



Katy Kuczek is a freelance writer and art director (owner, Aurora Design) with a national and international client base. Originally from the Hudson Valley, New York area, she's been self-employed and raising her two children in upstate New

York for the past two decades. Her daughter was born with sensorineural hearing loss, which led her to seek more information from HLAA. She is a current member, and former board member, of the HLAA Rochester Chapter. You can visit her website at [katykuczek.com](http://katykuczek.com).

# Take a Walk with Us, Won't You?

BY RONNIE ADLER AND ANN RANCOURT



The HLAA Walk4Hearing is a family-friendly event that raises awareness of hearing loss and provides strategies and information on topics such as hearing loss prevention, the importance of getting your hearing screened, treatment of hearing loss, and maintaining good hearing health.

When you leave at the end of a Walk4Hearing event you will feel empowered and inspired, and you will have learned that you are not alone; that you can live better with hearing loss! So, shall we take a Walk together?

## The Fall Walks Will Be Here Before You Know It!

It's hard to think about fall when we're in the middle of the mid-summer heat, but it will sneak up on us before we know it. And, it's never too early to start your fundraising!

The first of 12 fall Walk4Hearing events kick off in New York City in September and run through early November.

- September 23 ..New York City, New York
- September 30 ..Buffalo, New York
- September 30 ..Chicago, Illinois
- October 6.....Houston, Texas
- October 13.....Louisville, Kentucky
- October 14.....West Windsor, New Jersey
- October 14.....Cary, North Carolina
- October 14.....San Diego, California
- October 20.....Washington, D.C.
- October 21.....Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- October 28.....Brighton, Massachusetts
- November 3 ....Mesa, Arizona

## A Big Thank You to Our 2018 National Sponsors!

The Walk4Hearing would not be possible without the tremendous support of our sponsors. On behalf of the 48 million Americans who have some degree of hearing loss, HLAA would like to sincerely thank all of our sponsors that have stepped up to support the Walk4Hearing in 2018!

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For more information and to find and register for a Walk4Hearing near you (it's free and easy!) visit [walk4hearing.org](http://walk4hearing.org). **HL**



*Ronnie Adler and Ann Rancourt are the HLAA national Walk4Hearing managers. Ronnie can be reached at [radler@hearingloss.org](mailto:radler@hearingloss.org).*



*Ann Rancourt can be reached at [arancourt@hearingloss.org](mailto:arancourt@hearingloss.org).*

## Step Up and #screenURhearing

This year, our Walk4Hearing call to action is "Get Your Hearing Screened!" Untreated hearing loss affects overall health in negative ways—falls, isolation, anxiety, depression, and now, a link between untreated hearing loss and cognitive decline.

Take charge of your hearing health. Anyone can experience hearing loss and hearing screenings can detect a potential hearing loss. Hearing screenings are done by a hearing health care professional and by some community organizations such the

Lions Clubs and some doctors. If a screening shows signs of hearing loss a complete hearing evaluation by an audiologist or otolaryngologist is needed to put you back on the right track to better hearing health!

Let us know that you, or someone you care about, is taking charge and having a hearing screening by tweeting **#screenURhearing!** This encourages others to take action for their hearing health.

### Get Your Hearing Screened at a Walk Near You

We will be offering free hearing screenings at our Walk4Hearing locations this fall. For more information about getting your hearing screened at a Walk, visit the Walk4Hearing website.

### Why Get Your Hearing Screened?

The most important reason for having your hearing screened is to look for signs of a possible hearing loss. Hearing loss can be gradual and not always noticeable at the beginning. Early detection is an important step to preventive care in managing your overall health.





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# The Boys from Brooklyn: A Story of Hard Work, Love and Compassion

BY BRAD INGRAO

**Many people ask me how I came to the field of audiology,** and who shaped my professional style and ethics. While I have deep respect for my audiology mentors, including Mark Ross, James Gahn, Charles Berlin and Gordon Bienvenue, the seed was planted much earlier by my uncle Angelo and by my father, Joe.



Brad's parents, Gail and Joe



Uncle Angelo



Brad's father, Joe (left) with Uncle Angelo

The following is my recollection of their lives and how their love and support of each other created the ecosystem that allowed me to be writing this series of articles. I deliberately chose not to do a deep dive into the chronology and details as they are much less important than the lesson, “Do well by doing good.” I am pleased to introduce my HLAA family to the men who made me the man I am today: Angelo and Joe Ingrao, the Boys from Brooklyn.

On May 8, 1926, a baby boy was born in Brooklyn, New York to an immigrant couple of meager means and a surplus of motivation. Salvatore and Maria were beginning their American dream, and this boy, Archangelo—Angelo for short—was the foundation. Over the next decade, three more boys came along, and Angelo began to fulfill his parent’s plan of becoming a musician. The family sacrificed to provide lessons and opportunity, but Angelo put in the work. Hours, days, years at the piano and violin molded his raw talent into a marketable skill that allowed him to begin earning for the family before he could get a driver’s license.

Angelo had a difficult but fulfilling career built on the support of his family and the love of his wife Jeannie. His hard work led to tours with famed musician and bandleader Xavier Cugat, recordings with Doris Day, and many interesting club dates. It also led to an ear infection. Due to his need to keep working to support his family, including his younger brothers Tom, Joey and Frankie, he neglected his ears and the infection progressed to mastoiditis. After years of quiet suffering, and several radical surgeries, Angelo was left completely deaf in one ear and with a severe hearing loss in the other.

## Still the Man He Always Was

Angelo’s first experience with hearing aids left him feeling misunderstood, disrespected and lacking the information needed to regain his independence. It also left him unable to continue playing professionally. His brother Joe had moved to upstate New York and opened a pharmacy. It was decided that one by one, the whole family would leave Brooklyn and put down roots in Poughkeepsie, which, despite W.C. Fields’ previous observation, was not closed.

A “mother-daughter” house was built and Jeannie and Angelo moved in with Salvatore and Maria. One of the key features of this house was a large dining room that had a dual purpose. It would be the gathering place for the extended family for holidays, but it also had a secret superpower. The acoustics of the room were such that, despite his hearing loss, Angelo was able to find a “sweet spot” in the room which allowed him to hear his piano well enough to continue playing.

The sound of the piano made Jeannie smile and sing, and it reminded Angelo that despite all the challenges he faced with his hearing loss, he was still the man he always was. It also allowed him to give piano lessons to his nieces and nephews. I was lucky enough to be one of those students. And while I never did quite master the piano, I was still given the gift of music, which I still enjoy and share with my HLAA family on YouTube and at the occasional chapter holiday party.

The sound of the piano made Jeannie smile and sing, and it reminded Angelo that despite all the challenges he faced with his hearing loss, he was still the man he always was.



The Ingrao brothers  
(l to r)—Frankie,  
Joey, Tommy and  
Angelo

## Seizing an Opportunity

Shortly after settling in, Angelo tried his hand at a few businesses, but his hearing, and the hearing aid technology of the time, continued to fail him. Seeing his brother in need, but also needing more help, Joe invited both Angelo and Tom to work with him in the pharmacy. Frankie, also a pharmacist, opened his own store a few miles away.

At that time, there were several hearing aid dealers in the area, but none seemed to really meet the needs of those with a severe hearing loss. Seeing a need, and an opportunity, Angelo decided to study hearing science and become the person to better meet the needs of his hard of hearing brethren. With a copy of Hallowell Davis's book, "Hearing and Deafness," and a good old-fashioned Brooklyn work ethic, Angelo and Joe constructed a consultation office that, when later measured, exceeded the ANSI standards for audiology sound treatment rooms.

Word got out that there was a guy at the pharmacy who had a hearing loss. Who truly understood hearing loss. Who really cared. And who had a brother who allowed him to take all the time he needed to find solutions to improve people's quality of life and re-connect them to their families, friends and community.

## Uncle Angelo's Influence

In 1962, Joe met and married Gail. By 1968 they had four children, including me, who eventually ended up in the pharmacy on weekends to give my mother a break from my precocious, inquisitive, not so easy to deal with self.

A keen observer, I started noticing how some people came into the store with whistling ears and frowning faces. They'd sit on the bench across from the cash register, and a few minutes later Uncle Angelo would greet them and take them "in the back." Somewhere between 10-30 minutes later they'd return, minus the whistle, and their frown turned upside down.

Angelo took them to the front door for the first of two tests. They exited the pharmacy and stood in the glass-walled vestibule facing Main Street and talked. If all went well there, they came to the counter for their final exam. My dad always had a cigar or pipe in his mouth, so if they could understand him, whatever Angelo had done was a success.

These early examples of real-world needs assessments and verification led directly to my reputation for telling it like it is and were the foundation for many of my talks at local and national HCAA meetings and even a recent webinar ([hearingloss.org/webinars/beyond-audiogram](https://hearingloss.org/webinars/beyond-audiogram)).

After many years at the pharmacy, Angelo and Jeannie retired and moved to Florida. Unsure of how the humidity would affect his beloved Knabe baby grand piano, Angelo reluctantly sold it. While he researched replacement options, Jeannie began to miss the sound of music in the home. At lunch one day, she convinced Angelo to play a small spinet in a local restaurant. Less than a verse and chorus later, Angelo had a job offer.

By that time, I was working as an audiologist and got a call from my anxious uncle saying he needed new hearing aids and earmolds. When I described the current state of the art, fancy-schmancy programmable hearing aids, Angelo reminded me that for musicians, less is more. “Just a clean, clear, harmonically pure hearing aid and a good quality earmold.” The local restaurant gig led to a featured spot at a private country club, and decades after Cugat and Doris Day, “Andy” Ingrao was back.

With the help of a few backup hearing aids and carefully modified earmolds, Uncle Angelo was not only able to hold his own, but truly excel once again. He had a few good years before his hearing began to decline again and he had to hang up his tuxedo for good. Shortly after that, Angelo made two home recordings showing his incredible range, virtuosity and talent. The recordings are not great, but the music is phenomenal. You can find a few samples at [e-audiology.net/angelo.zip](http://e-audiology.net/angelo.zip). When listening to these, keep in mind he was unable to hear any of the music when he played the tracks.

Angelo passed away in 2005 and my dad in 2009. While I miss having them around, the lessons they

taught me are with me every day. Each patient I see starts out on that bench in the pharmacy and as much as possible, I make sure to give them the Main Street and Joey test. Who I am, how I practice and why I care is hardwired into me by the examples of these two men. Just a couple of regular guys from Brooklyn, who also happened to be amazing mentors from out of this world.

It is my honor and privilege to pay their gift forward through these articles and ongoing service to HLAA. **HL**



*Dr. Ingrao has been involved with HLAA for more than 20 years and is known as an early adopter of technologies, a computer geek and an author and lecturer who makes complex topics understandable. He's been around hearing loss his entire life and has several*

*family members with hearing loss.*

*This series of articles by Brad Ingrao, Au.D., aka “Doc Otoblock,” is designed to address technical questions about hearing technology, hearing science and strategies to communicate better with hearing loss in non-technical terms that are accessible to everyone. It is presented as a donation to HLAA by the author in memory of his Uncle Angelo, a professional musician who found a second career in hearing care after a near-total hearing loss, and his father Joe, the mild-mannered pharmacist who supported his brother’s career transformation. Dr. Ingrao credits both for teaching him the value of patient-centered care and listening to customers before acting.*

Who I am, how I practice and why I care is hardwired into me by the examples of these two men. Just a couple of regular guys from Brooklyn, who also happened to be amazing mentors from out of this world.

# A Guide to Internet Captioning of Your Favorite Shows, Movies, News and Social Content

BY JOHN H. CAPOBIANCO



**The captioned world is expanding.** Today, nearly all television programs—taped, live and near-live—are captioned in the United States. Organizations across the spectrum—from tech, financial services, and events to government and education—are using captions to help employees, customers, partners, citizens and students access and navigate the world around them. Simply put, captions have become part of our everyday lives.

Yet, there is still a major arena that can seem like the Wild West when it comes to captioning: the internet. Few regulations exist with respect to captioning original internet content, and let's face it, this is not likely to change as long as cat videos and school talent shows can be viewed alongside a live stream of a Major League Baseball game.

It can be confusing and frustrating to navigate online content in hopes of finding captioned videos, especially when seeking out news, sports and entertainment. As such, I'd like to share an overview of what you're likely to find and where so you can more fully engage with and enjoy captioned content on the internet. This is by no means an exhaustive list but will help guide you through what's happening with captioning for your favorite shows, movies, news and social content.

## Broadcast Content

Currently, the only videos mandated by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to appear online with captions are those that ran with captions on TV in the U.S. So, if you watched a show like "America's Got Talent" on NBC.com, it would be captioned just as if you were watching on your TV. However, if you looked elsewhere on the internet to find a clip of a certain performance or to watch the show, you may be out of luck. Captions for clips are not required on third-party sites and, therefore, may not appear. To make matters even more complicated, if you go to a site like YouTube, which uses its own voice recognition software to caption videos, you may see captions that read very differently from the original source.

**Takeaway:** It's best to head straight to the source (i.e., the network website) first. Almost every network posts episodes online, and episodes on the network-owned property will be accurately captioned. How do we know? Programs for all major networks and most cable channels are captioned by our nationwide team of highly skilled and company-employed captioners. If not, each network has compliance officers who deserve a contact to rectify the situation.

If the network has not posted the full episode and you turn elsewhere, sites like Hulu, iTunes and Netflix are your next best options.

## Over-the-Top (OTT) Content

Almost all streaming sites (also known as OTT in tech speak), such as Hulu, Netflix, Amazon Prime Video and iTunes, require content creators to deliver their



videos with captions. Reasons vary; it's easier to require captions on everything than wade through what did and did not air on television and when. English captions make a great source from which multilanguage subtitles can be created, and in some cases, captioning rules stem from fear of litigation. Although these services are exempt from FCC regulations as stand-alone products (i.e., they're not reliant on operators), courts ruled in a landmark 2012 lawsuit, National Association of the Deaf (NAD) v. Netflix, that the cloud on which they run is a public space, which is analogous to a shop or store. Therefore, it is subject to accommodations like captioning, thanks to the Americans with Disabilities Act, or ADA (see [vital.com/regulations](http://vital.com/regulations) for complete background and information on specific regulations).

There has been at least one other case in which a judge sided with Netflix, given that it is not a physical space, but NAD v. Netflix set the precedent.

**Takeaway:** Today, all of the major streaming sites realize that captioning is something that they absolutely should provide, and they are reaping the benefits. They're acquiring more deaf and hard-of-hearing (D/HOH) customers in addition to attracting viewers who simply want to watch without sound.

A word of caution, however. Unlike TV, where captions typically are placed on the left or right side of the screen to indicate who is speaking, sites like Hulu and Amazon can often push captions to the middle. This can make it harder to determine who's speaking. If it bothers you, contact a company representative and engage to help them understand how this impacts the user experience.

## Social Networks and User-Generated Content

And then there is YouTube. The company has identified captioning as a priority and has already captioned more than a million videos. That said, captioning is not always consistent across video channels nor can the quality of captions be verified because, unless the video owner intervenes, captions are created solely by speech recognition software rather than a combination of human

transcription and technology. If accuracy and reliability are important to you, you're probably better off starting with the network or streaming sites, at least in the near-term, or contacting the channel owner directly.

Beyond hosting videos of scripted and reality shows new and old, there are millions of videos uploaded on YouTube by users who want you to watch them play video games or teach you how to properly apply makeup. While more and more of these videos are being captioned by a person, you may not find captions on this type of content because it still requires that extra step from the content producer. The same holds for Facebook and Vimeo. One shining light is the recent realization that more than 85 percent of video on Facebook is viewed without sound. Producers are realizing that without captions, nobody will comprehend their content, and they're taking action.

## Ann Rancourt and Rachel Stevens Selected for Hamilton Relay 2018 Better Hearing and Speech Month Recognition Award for the District of Columbia

Congratulations are in order! HLAA's own Ann Rancourt, national Walk4Hearing manager, and Rachel Stevens, a member of the HLAA District of Columbia Chapter, were selected as the Hamilton Relay 2018 Better Hearing and Speech Month Recognition Award winners for the District of Columbia. Ann and Rachel were recognized at a ceremony hosted by Hamilton Relay and the Public Service Commission of the District of Columbia on May 29.

Recognizing a need, Ann and Rachel co-founded the HLAA Young Professionals group. Their goal is to provide opportunities for young professionals with hearing loss to get together and share their struggles as well as successes in living with hearing loss. HLAA Young Professionals meet monthly and participate in a variety of activities including happy hours, attending sporting events, movies and museum visits. Since its inception in January 2017, the group continues to increase in membership, expanding opportunities for interaction, providing a vibrant environment in which to socialize, support and share with one another.

"I am proud of our work in conjunction with Hamilton Relay and the honorees to ensure that telecommunications services in particular are accessible to all," said Betty Ann Kane, Chairman of the Public Service Commission of the District of Columbia. "The mission of the Public Service Commission is to ensure that utility services are provided to all in a non-discriminatory basis." **HL**



Rachel Stevens (left) and Ann Rancourt were selected as the Hamilton Relay 2018 Better Hearing and Speech Month Recognition Award winners for the District of Columbia. Congratulations Rachel and Ann!

More and more [internet] content is captioned every day, opening new avenues for media consumption. We just have to keep pushing forward to ensure that the culture and process of content creation continues to evolve as a mindset rather than only a mandate.



**Takeaway:** Major networks that prepare clips of upcoming or recently aired programs will almost always provide captions that air over their respective social channels, even though they are not required. And social media stars who are motivated to grow their audiences in order to secure sponsorships and earn revenue are likely to make the effort because captions broaden their appeal to diverse audiences. The friend that wants you to watch her dog dive into the pool to chase a ball is probably not going to go to the trouble, but like YouTube, Facebook is committed to captioning and is trying to make it easier for users to caption their videos. Expect to see an increase in captioned videos on social networks in the days to come.

Even so, user-generated content is not likely to ever be regulated due to the aforementioned “cat video” factor. The FCC won’t want to police everyone’s personal uploads. If you want to see captions added to a specific video or channel, contact the content producer directly rather than the platform. Many producers simply may not realize that they can caption videos themselves and will welcome the opportunity to engage with a new viewer.

## Professional Content Sites

As the media landscape continues to evolve, many traditional print and online news outlets have turned to video to summarize, illustrate stories or conduct on-camera interviews. Think *The New York Times* or *Huffington Post*. Like other types of internet content,

these sites are not required to caption their videos. Yet, many are moving toward adding captions. BuzzFeed and Vox, for example, caption videos because so many people want to watch without the sound.

**Takeaway:** Revenue is hard to come by in the media industry these days, so sites have realized that they need to caption in order to grow and retain their respective audiences. If video on one of your favorite news sites is not currently captioned, contact the editor.

While the internet poses complex challenges, more and more content is captioned every day, opening new avenues for media consumption. We just have to keep pushing forward to ensure that the culture and process of content creation continues to evolve as a mindset rather than only a mandate to better serve more than 50 million Americans who are deaf or have a hearing loss. **HL**



*John Capobianco is a passionate advocate for captioning America to give people digital accessibility for life. John serves as chief marketing officer at VITAC, the largest provider of real-time and offline captioning products and services in the United States.*

*For more information, please visit [vitac.com](http://vitac.com) and follow the company on LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter.*



BY KAY TYBERG

**After I was diagnosed with a hearing loss in first grade in the 1950s,** all through elementary school I felt alone because I was the only student in the school with hearing loss.

When my hearing loss became profound in 2008, I made the decision to get a cochlear implant, which was implanted in 2010. Up until then the cause of my hearing loss was unknown, but after the surgery the doctor told me I was born with two defective cochleas. Did it make a difference knowing the reason? No.

My older brother Clayton also has a hearing loss from his involvement in the Vietnam War when he was in the Army. In the spring of 2017, Clayton sent me an email asking, “What’s the best hearing aid

to buy?” I was shocked, but I had known for a couple of decades—and through his own admission—that Clayton was another statistic we at HLAA hear frequently about people who delay getting treatment for their hearing loss. Mind you, how many older brothers would ask their younger sister for advice?

I responded to his email by saying, “Hold on, let’s back up and start over again.” At the time I happened to be in the middle of the HLAA N-CHATT (Network of Consumer Hearing Assistive Technology

Clayton said he loved what he was experiencing [with his new hearing aids]. The excitement was beyond words. I choked up and tears of happiness were streaming down my cheeks.

Trainers) program so I instantly went into my “HAT” mode. I began by having him complete a listening assessment needs chart along with asking him some questions, such as when he last had a hearing test.

I went over everything with him, including causes of hearing loss, types of hearing aids, how to select an audiologist, warranties, follow-up visits, etc. I even asked Clayton’s wife, Pam, to get involved and try to learn what he was experiencing and what she was observing. Since Clayton and Pam live in another state, our correspondence was by email or through FaceTime.

## Taking Action

Clayton found an audiologist and was fitted for hearing aids. When I received that message from him, I was elated to tears. Clayton was wondering why I was crying. I am no longer the only member of our immediate family with hearing loss, and I knew there was still a big difference in being born with hearing loss and a person becoming a late-deafened adult.

So why the tears? After years of talking about his suspicion of having a hearing loss, Clayton decided to do the right thing—seek treatment for it. That was the reason for my tears.

Even after Vietnam Clayton experienced noise-induced hearing loss over the years from being around guns, farm equipment, lawn mowers, hunting, and his occupational environment. Along with hearing loss, he remembers having tinnitus when he was a kid, but he didn’t realize what it was.

Subsequent emails went back and forth as I checked up on how things were going and if Clayton had any questions for me. I knew I needed to take one step at a time so Clayton and Pam wouldn’t be overwhelmed. This is critical when working with any consumer, whether it’s your brother or not. In addition to our email correspondence I sent Clayton and Pam information by mail related to care and hearing assistive technology for their reading enjoyment.



Kay's brother Clayton is smiling from ear to ear since he got his new hearing aids.

## The Big Day Arrives

That July Clayton received his hearing aids. I am not sure who was more excited—Clayton, Pam or me. All I could think about was whether I had followed all the right protocols that I had learned up to that point on hearing assistive technology devices, in addition to hoping the hearing aids would meet his needs.

When I finally got the email, Clayton said he was wearing his new hearing aids and loved what he was experiencing. The excitement was beyond words and I wanted to jump up and down from sheer joy. When we ended our correspondence, I choked up and tears of happiness were streaming down my cheeks.

I have met so many people with hearing loss who give up or believe they can overcome the hearing loss on their own. What many people with hearing loss often overlook is how the whole family is affected. Pam has noticed a significant difference around their home and out in public.

My brother is adjusting quite well. He always has some great stories to share. On Facebook one morning he posted that he was trying to turn up the volume on the hearing aids only to hear his wife say, “Clayton you don’t have your hearing aids in your ears!” We chuckled, because these things happen. There are times I put my cochlear implant on and I forgot to put the battery in. It’s nothing to be embarrassed about.

It is a joy when anyone with a hearing loss takes a positive step to improve their quality of life. It’s never too late; no matter what age someone is they can embrace the need to socialize and still be an active part of the family and community.

Thanks to the N-CHAT program and its facilitators for teaching me and my colleagues the importance of consumer training. HLAA has benefitted thousands of people with hearing loss and changed my life forever. **HL**



Kay Tyberg is an HLAA member, a member of the HLAA Blair County Chapter, and an N-CHAT trainer and peer mentor. She resides in Altoona, Pennsylvania.



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## GET IN THE HEARING LOOP

### It's Time to Get in the Hearing Loop

Many people are not yet aware of hearing loops or other technologies that can improve communication access and public engagement or how they can enrich the lives of people with hearing loss, their families, friends, colleagues, and even communities. The Get in the Hearing Loop program is changing that...one loop, one advocate, one ADA request at a time.

Get in the Hearing Loop, a communication access program of HLAA, is dedicated to providing and promoting community education, advocacy on behalf of people of hearing loss, and consultation services to help venues of all kinds successfully implement hearing loop technology.

We dream of a world where people with hearing loss can thrive each day with communication access, full inclusion, and equal participation in all aspects of life, everywhere they go.

For more information about hearing loops and the Get in the Hearing Loop program, visit [hearingloss.org/programs-events/get-hearing-loop](http://hearingloss.org/programs-events/get-hearing-loop) or email [GITHLinfo@hearingloss.org](mailto:GITHLinfo@hearingloss.org).

## Moving? Don't forget to let us know!

If you are an HLAA member and will be making a move, whether it's permanent or just to get away for the winter, be sure to let us know so we can keep our records up to date. We wouldn't want you to miss a single issue of *Hearing Life*. Updating your information is easy and there are several ways to do it:

- 1) Send an email to [membership@hearingloss.org](mailto:membership@hearingloss.org). Be sure to include your name, new address, and if it's a seasonal move, the dates that you will be at the alternate address.
- 2) Through the **HLAA Online Portal**. If you have not used the Portal before you will need to set up an account. It's free and takes only a few minutes. The Online Portal allows you to update your profile, make a donation, view your giving history and manage your email preferences for receiving information such as our *Hearing Life e-News*, press releases, and the latest information about the conventions, Walk4Hearing, upcoming webinars, and advocacy initiatives. Just go to [bit.ly/hlaaportal](http://bit.ly/hlaaportal) and it will take you through the process.
- 3) Call us at **301.657.2248**.

#### ***A few important things to remember:***

- It can take up to two business days for our records to be updated, even if you use the Online Portal.
- The mailing list is sent to our mail house approximately two weeks prior to the mail date, which is typically the first week of the month of the issue (i.e., the March/April issue would be mailed the first week of March). The magazine is not forwarded due to the way it is mailed, so please let us know a *minimum* of three weeks prior to the address change. However, if you miss the notification deadline, email [membership@hearingloss.org](mailto:membership@hearingloss.org) or call **301.657.2248** and we will be happy to send you a copy.



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**“Having previously spent thousands on special hearing aids this product will do the job, so we can speak again. It is low cost and is something she will be able to manage—just one switch. If you are struggling, give this product a go. At this low price it is worth it. I wish I had found it years ago.”—C. Marsh**

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# Poetry

## Of Hearing

BY CHRISTY GAVITT

Please understand that if I lead you out of the party's nightmare cacophony

I wish to hear your ideas as well as mine.

Please understand if I invade your body's zone of comfort

It's because long distances between your mouth and my ear are the enemy.

It's because sound morphs into an aural muddle as it travels through the imperfect air.

Please understand that the graph line that plots my detection of high frequencies plummets

as steeply as a black diamond ski slope.

Your vowels and hard consonants are as vivid and striking as a morning shadow—

But your *s, f, p, h, t, wh, and z* are like the same shadow overtaken by clouds.

Please understand that you need to reserve our restaurant table away from the middle of the room

far from large parties

in a booth where sound better ricochets

in an area with low ceilings

where the light allows me to see and read your lips

as well as detect your frustration and exhaustion.

Please understand that you can't set down your Sprite in the movie theatre's seat drink holder

Because my closed caption box has claimed that valued indentation

Or that my need for open caption play performances

obliges you to attend on Wednesday at 2 p.m.

And at bedtime, when my ear amplifiers are removed

so full of amazing but limited technology

Please understand that I'm unable to respond to your words of love

or your spontaneous confessions that surface from the night's depths

In my silent cocoon

The tintinnabulation of your touch remains.

## Beauty in the Sound

BY ALYSSA BLACKMER

There is beauty in the sound of a crying baby, giving relief to its worried mother, of laughter coming from one's lips.

There is beauty in the sound in the pages of a turning book, adventure awaits in the knocking on a door, for company has arrived.

There is beauty in the sound of a siren, indicating that help is coming, of shouting commands in the fight for life.

There is beauty in the sound of rain on the rooftop, an end to the drought of the wind, whispering through the trees.

There is beauty in the sound of lyrics, held tight and so true, instruments of never-ending harmony.

There is beauty in the sound of things unheard for so long, learning to hear what has always been, for damage may have been done, but help draws near, for there is beauty in the sound.



*Alyssa Blackmer is currently a second-year student in the Central Michigan University Doctorate in Audiology degree program. She enjoys spending time with her parents, siblings, and nephew, and in her spare time enjoys writing, reading, and cooking.*



*Christy Gavitt lived overseas for 32 years working in emergency and development programs for various organizations, mostly in East Africa. She moved back to the U.S. 10 years ago and is currently a global health consultant.*

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