

Chapter Development Team Grows

Melissa Kruse, HLAA's new chapter engagement manager, previously served as our meeting planner for the HLAA 2023 Convention. In addition to event planning, Melissa brings a wealth of experience in volunteer engagement, strategic planning and community outreach.

Melissa's vision, together with Carla Beyer-Smolins, HLAA membership and chapter coordinator, is to develop, strengthen and grow all chapters. They recently surveyed chapter leaders to develop a list of priorities and are now working to implement them. Both Melissa and Carla will also be visiting chapters to meet local members throughout the year. If you have any questions, ideas or want to start a chapter in your area, please reach out to **chapters@hearingloss.org**.



Chapter Engagement Manager Melissa Kruse (immediately at right of the banner) visited the HLAA Indianapolis Chapter on September 9.



Beyer-Smolin and Director of Public Policy Lise Hamlin spoke at the Vermont Chapter's virtual meeting on September 26.

Save the Date

A chapter and state leader training is being planned for Wednesday, June 26 at the HLAA 2024 Convention in Phoenix. More information coming soon.



HLAA Membership and Chapter Coordinator Carla Beyer-Smolin (second from left in front) joined the HLAA Montgomery County (MD) Chapter on September 24.



Beyer-Smolin (center) with Alice Hecht and Paula Olejarz, HLAA members and co-organizers of Ashby Ponds Senior Living Community hearing support group in Ashburn, Virginia.

Chapter Success Stories

AARP, VITAC Highlight Open Captioning Advocacy Efforts

HLAA Colorado Chapters have helped make movie-going an enjoyable, hearing accessible experience. They've been a driving force to get open captioned movies into local community theaters and successfully advocated for the Colorado Environmental Film Festival (CEFF) to provide open captions for all film showings. See their list of open captioned theaters at bit.ly/3ufTQne.

The chapter's efforts were featured in a recent AARP Colorado article (bit.ly/3ugxRwF) as well as on the website of captioning provider VITAC (bit.ly/3QYnuq0).

HLAA California Pushes for Public Closed Captioning Activation

Closed captioning access on video and broadcast content in public spaces is critical to give people with hearing loss full and equal communication access, particularly during emergency situations and extreme weather events. However, in public venues like restaurants, hotels and fitness centers, all too often remote controls go missing or employees don't know how to turn captions on when requested by a person with a disability—putting them in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

While numerous cities across the United States have enacted mandatory captioning ordinances, Washington is currently the only state with a law requiring businesses to activate closed captioning on televisions in public areas during business hours. The HLAA California State Association is determined to do the same. In 2021, its leaders worked closely with one assembly member who considered introducing a similar bill, but ultimately other legislation took precedence during the pandemic. They are now seeking another state legislative partner and exploring the possibility of advancing a federal regulation.

These are both great examples of advocacy efforts by local and regional HLAA communities in action!



HLAA California State Association leaders (L-R): Cristina Duarte, Nanci Linke-Ellis (president), Rich Osborne, Katie Wright (vice president), Liz Lesan, Tim Browning, Laura Gaeta (secretary), Heather Lehr, Trevor Finneman and Sharon Wasserman-Swerdlow

If your chapter has recently celebrated a success or milestone, let us know at chapters@hearingloss.org.

HLAA Award Nominations

Has your chapter or an individual in your community made a significant difference for people with hearing loss by providing information, education, support and advocacy? Nominate them for an HLAA 2024 Award by January 5, 2024! Nomination forms and a description of award categories can be found at hearingloss.org/awards.

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