

HLAA's Legacy of Self-Help Expands Nationwide

BY MELISSA KRUSE

When the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) was founded in 1979, it was grounded in the principle of self-help. Members offered one another emotional and practical support, sharing strategies, experiences and encouragement in ways that professionals alone could not provide. At the heart of this model were HLAA Chapters—local groups that embodied our mission of education, advocacy and community.

More than 45 years later, this principle remains central to HLAA's work, and we are thrilled to see a wave of new and revitalized chapters forming across the country. In the past year alone, HLAA Chapters and support groups have launched or reemerged in California, Washington, Arizona, Nebraska, Texas, Florida, New York and Virginia.



One inspiring success story comes from Virginia's Peninsula region. This chapter began thanks to a generous bequest from Ms. Jean Cline, who directed funds to HLAA after her mother Jean Hibbard's passing, with the hope of reinstating the former Williamsburg Chapter. With guidance and support from the HLAA Virginia Beach Chapter and Access Virginia, volunteers came together to form an exploratory group. Recognizing the need to serve a broader area, the group adopted the name HLAA Virginia Peninsula Chapter. Just over a year later, the group officially became an HLAA Chapter.

Following discussions with the new chapter's leadership and Ms. Cline, the remaining funds from her bequest will now be used to support the formation of more HLAA chapters across Virginia. Using the successful Virginia Peninsula model, HLAA Virginia Beach and Access Virginia are now considering new chapter development in regions such as the Eastern Shore, Charlottesville and Roanoke.

Interested in Starting a Chapter?

Starting an HLAA chapter or support group in your area is easy:

1. Join HLAA
2. Read about our Mission and Impact
3. Fill out the Chapter Interest Form
4. Connect with at least three unrelated HLAA members in your community
5. Set a meeting schedule and begin gathering

We can help new groups by identifying potential members in your area. Together, we can expand our reach and continue to build a stronger, more connected community for people with hearing loss across the country. **HL**

For more information, visit hearingloss.org/start-a-chapter or email Melissa Kruse, chapter engagement manager at mkruse@hearingloss.org



Above: Lois Boyle, executive director of Access Virginia, speaks at the HLAA Virginia Peninsula Chapter launch on June 21, 2025.



HLAA Virginia Peninsula Chapter co-founders Bobby Graves and Thomas Blackman.