Persistence Pays Off...

Ten Years of HLAA-DV Advocacy Effort in Walnut Creek

In 2010, Ann Thomas, president of the HLAA Diablo Valley Chapter, began advocating for communication access for people with hearing loss in the Contra Costa County library system. Even though the ADA (passed in 1990) required all city and county governments to develop transition plans to provide accommodations, communication access for people with hearing loss was not included in the Contra Costa County plans. This included the library system.

Initial advocacy efforts were directed toward getting counter hearing loops installed at information counters in the libraries, and providing information on the library website about how to get accessibility. When the new Walnut Creek library opened in late 2010, it was the first library to have hearing loops at information counters. Today, all libraries in the county system have counter loops at information desks. (To see the Contra Costa County Library accessibility webpage, go to http://guides.cclib.org/c.php?g=43933&p=277515)

Around the same time, contact with the city of Walnut Creek was initiated to determine if the programs and services of the city were accessible to people with hearing loss. At that time there was no advertising via signage, printed materials, or online websites about what equipment was available, where it was located, or whom to contact in order to use it. Also, on the City website, posted videos of local government events, including live city council meetings, had no accessibility. The advocacy efforts for library access and city government access in Walnut Creek dovetailed. A new library was being built in Walnut Creek, and although the library system is a county program, the new building for the library was owned by the city.

The new library contained a large meeting space, Oak View Room. This room was used by the library for its programs as well as for city events such as a speaker series; it was also rented out by the city to other organizations for events and was administered by the Walnut Creek Parks and Recreation Department.

(Continued on page 4)
Assembly Bill 598: Insurance for Children’s Hearing Aids

Bipartisan legislation has passed in the California Assembly Health Committee and has now gone to the California Senate Appropriations Committee. It would require health insurance plans to cover hearing aids for children up to age 18.

The time to take action is now! Successful floor votes on AB 598 in the California State Senate and then in the Assembly must be completed no later than September 12, 2019 for the bill to be enacted in this legislative session.

Go to: LetCaKidsHear.com/take-action/ to identify your State representatives. Then call or email both of them to say that you support AB 598.

HLAA-California State Association is proud to support AB 598.
HLAA2019 — My Impressions as a First Time Participant

By Nancy Asmundson

In 2016 I joined the HLAA East Bay Chapter. After attending my first meeting, I volunteered to help. Kay Athos, the Steering Committee (SC) leader, put me to work right away, organizing a list of Steering Committee job responsibilities A few months later, when the job of Newsletter Editor was available, I took over and still hold the position.

Other SC members spoke highly about the annual HLAA Convention, I thought it sounded interesting and decided I would like to go. In January, 2019, I saw that there were scholarships available to defray the cost of attending, so I applied. Lo and behold, in mid April, I heard I got one! I sent in my acceptance and got ready.

Last June, I attended all four days of HLAA2019 in Rochester, New York, and had a great time. One wonderful advantage to being there was the opportunity to meet new people from around the country, to find out what they are doing with their chapters, and to hear about the initiatives they are pursuing to change access in their areas of the country. I was delighted to meet such wonderful people whom I hope to keep in touch with so we can continue to share information.

Convention was so well organized, starting at check-in, where everyone was given a handy quilted lunch bag with a badge, a Program and Exhibit Guide, tickets to optional events, plus a t-shirt.

On Wednesday afternoon, I attended two HLAA State/Chapter Leadership Workshops. Bert Meijers of the IDA Institute in The Netherlands presented about Person Centered Hearing Care. This is a caring approach developed by the IDA Institute to help audiologists work with patients who have hearing loss. It was inspiring to hear that there is another way. In the second session, Ann Thomas, president of the HLAA Diablo Valley chapter in Walnut Creek, presented two topics: Branding Your Chapter and Get in the Hearing Loop (GITHL), the HLAA campaign to promote hearing loop installations throughout the country. Ann has done a fantastic job of advocating for hearing loops; she presented several workshops during Convention on the importance of having loops in public spaces and how to approach venues about looping. The day ended with an evening ceremony to present State and Chapter Awards.

On Thursday (Day 2), we heard from the Keynote Speaker, Rebecca Alexander, who has a genetic disorder called Usher Syndrome which is causing her to lose her hearing and her sight. I enjoyed listening to her talk about her current full life and speaking engagements around the world. (Read more about Rebecca on page 7.) After the keynote, workshops began and the Demo Room opened in the afternoon. Later, Caption Call’s popular evening Get Acquainted Party rounded out the day with its cute theme of the Roaring 20’s, complete with flappers and divas.

On Friday, I appreciated the Research Symposium, a doctor’s panel about genetic markers for hearing loss. Currently, 164 genes have been identified that are believed to be connected to hearing loss. Although genetic hearing loss doesn’t apply to me, it was interesting to hear about promising advances and how they might help people who inherit gene(s) that affect hearing. One of the workshop tracks was on genetics and I went to an afternoon session presented by Hela Azaiez, PhD, from the University of Iowa, on “From Blood to Mutation: Demystifying Genetic Testing for Hearing Loss”. Dr. Aziz presented information about the process of identifying the specific genes which are responsible for many types of hearing loss, and how individuals can be tested to determine if they have any of those genes in their DNA. Although research is in its very early stages, some of the participants were excited to find avenues they wanted to pursue. The day ended with Evening at the Museum, a trip to the George Eastman Museum, formerly his home and the setting for many Kodak publicity events. Eastman was a huge influence in Rochester, NY, establishing the Eastman School of Music and endowing many arts and educational projects around the city.

Saturday was the last day for the Exhibit Hall where participants could talk to vendors and learn more about their products. It also included final presentations in the Demo Room where we could actually try on different products to see how they might help, plus there was time to talk in more depth with the vendors. Convention wrapped up with Cheers to 40 Years! HLAA Anniversary Celebration and Awards Gala on the last evening, a beautiful sit-down dinner in the Hyatt Regency ballroom, followed by presentations to National Award winners, including two from California.

To me, the best thing about HLAA is that it gives hope to the hard of hearing. I’m reminded of one workshop I attended, presented by Betty Hauck, a concert musician. When she was confronted with hearing loss, she gave up her music because she couldn’t participate in symphony orchestras anymore. But when she found HLAA, she learned about solutions for her hearing issues which gave her hope and (Continued on page 9)
HLAA-Diablo Valley Chapter members wanted to be able to participate in the library programs as well as other events hosted in the Oak View Room. It was a very difficult and exhausting process to determine how to get communication access in the space. No one in the City or in the County knew what existed or exactly whom to contact to find out. It was finally determined that an FM system had been installed in the space in an effort to comply with ADA requirements in the California building code. Unfortunately, there were no headphones or neckloops, only ear speakers which were not hearing aid compatible. Eventually headphones and neckloops were procured, but the FM System never worked adequately for HLAA chapter members.

In 2017 the City of Walnut Creek hired a hearing loop consultant and 10 locations were evaluated for potential hearing loops. The city initially committed to installing three, the Oak View Room another meeting room in the library and the Lakeside Room at Heather Farm Park. These three hearing loop installations were completed in Spring, 2019. According to librarian Natalie Abbott, the new hearing loops at Walnut Creek Library are a big improvement over the old equipment and have been well received by the public.

Steve Waymire, Walnut Creek City Engineer and ADA Coordinator, said that because there is funding already budgeted for ADA accommodations, projects can be scheduled when regular improvements are done. An additional hearing loop at Shadelands Art Center Auditorium is planned for Spring, 2020, when the flooring will be replaced. And other hearing loops are expected to be installed in city facilities in the future.

Although the HLAA-DV advocacy efforts have made inroads to providing communication access for people with hearing loss in Walnut Creek, the work is far from finished. Hearing loops in several venues and captions at city council meetings as well as live broadcast and archived videos on the Internet are in place. But people with hearing loss must continue to speak up to elected city officials and ADA Coordinators about our needs.

Remember change can take much longer than you think and advocacy doesn’t always follow a straight path. The efforts can be one step forward, two steps back; starts and stops and long pauses; or even coming in through the back door. Advocacy is an ongoing effort. New or temporary staff will need training, people might unplug or disconnect parts of the system and change settings so they stop working. Groups using the venues will need to be shown how to use the equipment and most speakers will need to be coached on using a microphone properly.

But don’t give up! If you persist change does happen.

Do you need help advocating for hearing loops?

Check out the new Get In The Hearing Loop Toolkit. https://www.hearingloss.org/hearing-loop-toolkit/

This online resource offers free downloadable tools to help you advocate for assistive listening systems via hearing loops in your community. Whether you want to learn how a hearing loop works, more about providing ADA-mandated communication access, or need a poster for your loop presentation, this toolkit has resources to guide you every step of the way.
I recently learned that the average age of first-time hearing aid wearers is around 70. I’m a good deal younger than that, so how did I get here so soon? While it’s impossible to know the exact cause, I blame most of my hearing loss on the insanely loud concerts I went to in my younger years. I also blame the noisy car I drove. The exhaust headers were so loud that I had to blast the radio just to hear the music over the sound of the car.

The problem with noise-induced hearing loss is that the damage is often done when you’re young and feel indestructible. By the time you realize what you’ve done, it’s too late. The only way to avoid permanent noise-induced hearing loss is to limit your exposure to excessively loud sounds, and to use sensible hearing protection when loud noise is unavoidable.

Noise-induced hearing loss sneaks up on you

Hearing loss creeps up on you. At first, you might notice a little more difficulty hearing in loud restaurants and other social settings. If your hearing loss progresses, you’ll eventually struggle to hear people clearly in everyday conversation. You’ll start asking people to repeat themselves more often, and you might start to blame poor room acoustics, or even accuse people of mumbling. Eventually, you’ll need to come to terms with the problem and accept that your hearing isn’t what it used to be. Even then, you’ll probably try to avoid doing anything about it (like I did) until your friends and family discuss it with you (or perhaps even complain).

No motivation

Why do people delay addressing their hearing loss? For my own part, I think I was just delaying the process of dealing with it. “I’m busy. I’m traveling. I can’t fit it in right now. I’ll get going on it after our vacation.” Years went by this way; I just could not find the motivation to get my hearing checked.

As a distance runner who travels for work, I typically train for a race on three continents. Early wake-ups are not uncommon, and I’ve set the alarm for 3:30 a.m. multiple times to get my mileage in before work. I’ve even split up a long run between Europe and America on the same day. Twice. And yet, I couldn’t find the time to address my hearing. Pathetic!

Ground zero

I finally decided to do something about my problem. First, I had to get a proper hearing check. I began by talking to friends who recommended a local ear, nose, and throat (ENT) doctor. He found no indication of a medical condition needing treatment and referred me to the on-staff audiologist for a thorough hearing test. The audiogram confirmed what I already knew: that I had a hearing loss.

Choices, Choices, Choices

After making the decision to deal with my hearing loss, my next big decision was what type of product to purchase. Because I work for a company that manufactures speakers (“receivers”) and microphones for consumer-grade earphones and hearing aids, I am very familiar with the spectrum of devices available to assist the hard of hearing. After a discussion with my audiologist, I considered hearing aids, personal sound amplification products (PSAPs), and hearables.

Hearables and PSAPs are less expensive options; they are intended for those with normal hearing who need situational assistance, but still feel they can hear well in less demanding conditions. Had such devices existed five years ago, they may have made sense for me. But now it’s too late; my hearing issues are beyond “situational.” While hearing aids do cost significantly more, I am fortunate in that I am able to make the investment.

Selecting a hearing aid

After deciding to purchase hearing aids, I started doing my homework. I wanted to get a good handle on exactly what I needed – and wanted – from hearing aids. In addition to general hearing aid functionality, hands-free phone call support and stereo music streaming seemed like must-haves; so did rechargeable batteries.

My journey has begun

Now that my journey has begun, if there’s one thing I would say to others, it’s “Just do it.” I don’t even have my hearing aids yet, but I’m already getting excited for what’s coming. The other day, I was at a funeral service for a friend. A number of her family members spoke quite eloquently, but I was far enough back that I struggled to hear them. I remember thinking to myself, “Another week and I won’t have to put up with this any more!” I’m also looking forward to test-

(Continued on page 10)
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Hearing Loss: When You Feel Like Your Senses Fail You

By Shari Eberts; reprinted with permission.

One of my favorite parts of the annual HLAA Convention is the inspiring speakers. This year was no exception. Rebecca Alexander, a psychotherapist and author, gave the keynote. She has Usher syndrome, which means that she is progressively going deaf and blind. Her vision problems presented in childhood, but when she began having trouble hearing in college, she received her diagnosis. Both senses would be taken from her over time. This is a crushing blow, particularly at age 19. The way she has dealt with such a huge loss is inspiring.

It is impossible to imagine the terror of losing two senses simultaneously, but I felt myself in her shoes as she shared her journey of acceptance and empowerment. I could relate to the stories she told about her struggles and the silly and brave things she did along the way. One story particularly resonated with me — the moment she realized she could no longer trust her senses.

Learning to Love Your Hearing Aids

By then, Rebecca was 28 years old, living in NYC and working as a psychotherapist. She was feeling quite sure of herself. She easily navigated the path from her apartment to and from her office each day and did not typically use her cane along this route. But one day, she walked full speed into a pole. She just didn’t see it. She realized that she could no longer trust her senses. She would need to use her cane all the time, even on routes where she had previously felt comfortable.

As Rebecca tells the story, the first five times she used her cane after this event, she had tears streaming down her cheeks, mourning the loss of her hard fought self-reliance. But then one day, she wasn’t crying. She was walking better as she began to learn how to use her cane and regain her independence. She used to hate that cane, but now she loves it because it gives her the freedom to live her life as she chooses.

I teared up thinking of the feelings of loss she must have felt at only 28 years of age. It brought me back to the first time I got my ear molds taken, around that same age. My audiologist was gentle, yet I still remember the pain of the cotton being inserted deep into my ear canal and the mounting feeling of pressure and silence as the gel hardened. Then came the realization that I would always need to wear something in my ears to help me hear. At the time, the thought was devastating.

When Rebecca spoke about her love/hate relationship with her cane, I knew exactly what she meant, because that is how I felt about my hearing aids. At first, I hated them. I don’t think I openly cried (Continued on page 12)
Hearing Loss Advocacy

By John Waldo

Live Theater Captioning...One More Time

In previous issues, I’ve discussed a case in St. Louis in which a federal judge declared that a large live theater must show captioning for any performance when a request is made in advance unless the theater can explain why it can’t do so. I’m pleased to report that the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed that decision, essentially making this the law of the land.

The case started when Tina Childress, whom many of us know through her frequent presentations at HLAA conferences, asked the Fabulous Fox theater to provide captions for a performance of the musical “Rent,” which was scheduled more than a year after her request. Fox said it did not provide captions, and had no plans to do so, but would provide an ASL interpreter. Childress replied that while she is fluent in ASL, she is late deafened, her native language is English, and she wanted to understand the words as written by the dramatist and lyricist, and not as interpreted.

I sent a letter to Fox stressing its obligations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which Fox ignored. With no alternative available, we filed a lawsuit in St. Louis. In addition to Childress, Mary Stodden, greater St. Louis area resident and former president of the local chapter of HLAA (HLAA-GSL), joined as an individual plaintiff. Both the Association of Late Deafened Adults (ALDA) and HLAA-GSL joined as organizational plaintiffs, representing the interests of their members and similarly situated individuals.

After some negotiations, Fox hired a local court-reporting firm, which displayed the captions on individual viewing tablets, usable from any seat. Since the any-seat approach meant that Fox did not face the logistical problem of blocking out specific seats for caption-users, and since we had agreed that a prior request for captioning was reasonable — no need to bring in the captioner if nobody wants captions for that performance — we asked Fox why it could not provide captions whenever a request was made.

That became the question in the case: whether Fox could provide access only for certain performances according to a schedule established by the theater, or whether it had to accommodate the schedules of prospective patrons and provide captioning when requested. We based our argument on a provision of the Americans with Disabilities Act that requires covered entities to offer people with disabilities an equal opportunity to enjoy the services of the business. The trial court agreed with us, and entered an order requiring Fox to provide captioning whenever requested, which it has done since the entry of the order.

Fox appealed. It said that the ADA requirements are satisfied if a business provides “meaningful access,” and said that standard is met if it offers a reasonable, although unspecified, number of captioned performances. It also said that because it had, in fact, provided captioning whenever a request was made, the case should be dismissed in its entirety because there was no longer any genuine dispute between the parties.

The appellate court agreed with our position. It said that the “meaningful access” standard requires an equal opportunity to gain the same benefit as a hearing person, and said that providing fewer opportunities for people with hearing loss failed to meet that standard.

As to the argument that Fox had never denied captioning, we noted that when Childress could not attend one scheduled captioned performance and asked for an additional alternative date, Fox agreed but explicitly stated that this agreement was an exception to its policy that would not always be available. The appeals court agreed with us that we should not have to wonder, every time we want to see a show, whether it will be captioned, and that Fox needed to change its policy to state that captioning will always be provided. (The court obviously was aware that the whole purpose of the appeal was to provide Fox with the opportunity in the future to deny captioning, even if it had not done so in the past.)

Captioning, like ASL interpreters, is defined by the ADA as “auxiliary aids and services,” which are “effective methods of making aurally delivered material available to individuals with hearing impairments.” The ADA requires that aids and services be offered unless the business can demonstrate that doing so would impose an “undue burden,” which ADA regulations describe as “significant difficulty or expense.” (Substituting the adjective “significant” for the adjective “undue” is little or no help in determining where the line lies between “too expensive” and “not too expensive.”)

In any event, determining whether the cost rises to the level of “undue” or “significant” requires a balancing of cost vs. resources. During the pre-trial discovery phase, we asked Fox to disclose its revenue, i.e., the resource side. It declined to do so, declaring that this was not relevant information. On the cost side, we argued that without knowing how many requests for captioning it might get, Fox could not possibly know what the ultimate cost of on-request captioning would be.

(Continued on page 9)
Again, the court of appeals agreed with us. It said that Fox did not raise the “undue burden” defense at the trial level, and could not do so for the first time on appeal. But as we had urged, the court also said that if the number of requests actually reaches the level that Fox found overly burdensome, it could always go back to the trial court at that time and raise the issue again.

The court also affirmed the award of attorneys’ fees. I mention this to point out that advocacy of this nature does not cost the individual or organizational plaintiffs anything. If we go to court and prevail, the ADA requires the defendant to pay the fees of the plaintiffs’ attorney, as well, presumably, the fees of their own attorneys. However, the fee-shifting provision is not mirror image, and the plaintiffs do not have to pay the other side’s attorneys if the defense wins.

Ironically, this decision came out while I was in Denver at the annual Kennedy Center Leadership Exchange in Arts and Disabilities conference, and only minutes before I participated in a panel on live-theater captioning. Many representatives of the performing-arts organizations who were there clearly understood that this ruling does apply to them. Fortunately, there were a number of people in attendance who understood imaginative ways of providing every-seat, every-performance captioning at a cost that even the smallest theaters can bear.

My overall takeaway from the case is this: Yes, it imposes legal obligations on live theaters that many are not prepared to meet at the moment. But it is that very need for better and less expensive ways to provide captioning that will continue to incentivize technical providers and theater managers to develop better ways of doing things. While much of that work has been ongoing for some time, the trial court decision lent a new sense of urgency to that effort. Thankfully, the appellate-court decision will keep the process moving forward.

This appeals court decision is a public record, freely available online at:

https://ecf.ca8.uscourts.gov/opndir/19/08/182352P.pdf

John Waldo is an attorney whose practice focuses on advocacy for people with hearing loss. He is national Advocacy Committee Chair for the Association of Late Deafened Adults (ALDA), and consults with non-profit advocacy groups in Washington and Oregon. He can be reached at: johnfwaldo@hotmail.com

Convention (Continued from page 3)

motivated her to find other ways to express her music. She now uses her music to entertain at senior centers and other venues. Betty has brought joy to many with her rediscovered music. Indeed, she played a few selections for us and I was deeply moved by her beautiful ability.

I hope everyone can have the opportunity to attend a future HLAA Convention!

Nancy Asmundson is a member of HLAA-East Bay Chapter. She is on the Steering Committee and edits the chapter newsletter.

HLAA2019 Awards

Three Californians were recognized for their contributions to the hearing loss community at the HLAA Convention in Rochester, New York. National awards were presented at the Cheers to 40 Years! gala on Saturday, June 22, 2019.

The Alice Marie Stone Family Involvement Award was presented to Alan Katsura of the Diablo Valley Chapter. The award is named after Alice Marie (Ahme) Stone, wife of Founder Rocky Stone and its first recipient. The award recognizes dedicated family members and their contributions to the growth and development of HLAA.

Although he doesn’t have a hearing loss, Alan’s mother, Tillie Katsura, who is in her 90s, is hard of hearing. Alan is very supportive, driving Tillie to chapter meetings and special events; without his efforts, his mom would be very isolated. The Diablo Valley Chapter is very grateful for Alan’s participation—he is always active behind the scenes on chapter meeting days, making sure everything and everyone is taken care of. He volunteers as chapter webmaster, demonstrates technology, hosts outreach events for the chapter, and makes sure the hearing assistive devices are working at events. In addition, Alan has a gift for intuitively understanding the needs of others and is able to help new members feel comfortable right away.

An Outstanding Young Adult Award was presented to Bryan Martinez. A car accident at the age of eight resulted in Bryan’s sudden hearing loss; the exact cause of which is unknown. But he lost much more than his hearing: Bryan’s mother died in the crash and he also experienced paralysis in his right leg. In spite of this devastating tragedy, Bryan is regarded by his teacher Theresa Copple as the most resilient young man she has ever met. He is driven and passionate about his schoolwork and grades. He maintains a 3.0 grade point average and excels in honors and AP classes.

Now in his senior year, Bryan is heavily involved in various school activities, from film to sports, and even robotics. An interest in technology was sparked by his use of hearing aids and other hearing assistive technologies. Each school year Bryan assists in the maintenance of the school sound systems and transmitters; he also coaches teachers and staff on proper use of microphones. Bryan has earned a scholarship from the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID).

In a separate ceremony for State and Chapter Awards on Wednesday evening, June 19, recognition for the Best State Newsletter was awarded to The Hearing Loss Californian and was accepted by editor Liz Lesan, member of the Los Angeles Chapter and ex officio member of the HLAA-CA Board of Trustees.

Three Californians were awarded HLAA2019 scholarships to attend Convention: Nancy Asmundson, Bryan Martinez, and Gonzalo Martinez.
driving them at our favorite Mexican restaurant and tequila bar, where I can never hear everyone at the table.

As I was leaving the doctor’s office, a funny thought crossed my mind. Taking out and putting on headphones is an obvious act, but with my hearing aids on, I’ll be able to fire up the music whenever I want and nobody will notice. Stigma? What stigma? These things are going to rock!

Andrew Bellavia is a new hearing aid user who currently works as Director of Market Development for Knowles Corp, a company that supplies multiple industries, including the hearing healthcare industry, with hardware. He is not personally involved in his company’s relationships with hearing aid manufacturers and emphasizes that this article reflects only his own opinions. He hopes that by sharing his story he can influence others to protect their hearing, and to make it easier for those with untreated hearing loss to accept their condition and seek care without waiting as long as he did. Connect with him on LinkedIn and Twitter.

This article originally appeared on the HearingTracker.com website where you can find Part II of Andrew Bellavia’s hearing aid experience. The website also features news articles, expert answers, and an informative hearing blog.

San Diego Walk4Hearing
Sunday, September 29, 2019
Crowne Point in Mission Bay
700 Corona Oriente Rd
8:30 a.m. Registration/Check-in
9:30 a.m. Walk begins
For more information go to: walk4hearing.org
Click on Find A Walk

Long Beach Walk4Hearing Results
On Saturday, June 8, 2019, Walk participants met at Marina Green Park in Long Beach for a day of fun, camaraderie...and fundraising.

This year’s event raised $50,000 to fund national and local programs to provide information, education, support and advocacy to people with hearing loss.
Greetings HLAA-CA members!

Hearing Loops – so important to us and so frustrating at times. How great would it be if your chapter members could simply walk into a room, switch to their t-coil settings, sit down, and enjoy the meeting?

Chances are that some of your dedicated volunteers tote in a system and crawl on the floor to lay down a temporary hearing loop before each meeting. (Afterward they stay late to dismantle the loop, lug it out to the car, and take it home until next time.) Or perhaps you are in one of those lucky groups that meets in a venue with a permanently installed hearing loop.

The Long Beach/Lakewood Chapter has been working on getting a permanent hearing loop installed in their meeting place for over a year now. Thanks to the participation of several members, they were eligible to apply for a Hearing Assistive Technology grant from a private source. With most of the funding in place, they began their campaign to get approval from the City of Lakewood. First, they had to submit a proposal to the City for permission to install a loop in the room where they meet. Then, they waited. And waited. And waited. (The workings of bureaucracy move very, very slowly.)

In the meantime, the chapter looping committee met with the City of Long Beach ADA coordinator to test a permanently installed loop in a city library. It turned out the loop wasn’t working. The City coordinator had to contact the building contractor who had to contact the looping subcontractor, and then another meeting had to be scheduled.

During this second meeting, a few issues became very clear:
1. Identifying who is trained to be sure everything is hooked up correctly
   —OR, more importantly—
2. Identifying who is trained and has responsibility to make sure no one touches the settings
3. Identifying a person responsible for timely sharing of hearing loop information after staff changes
4. Determining if a maintenance program included in the initial contract
5. Identifying a contact person for staff to notify if there is a problem and making sure all staff is informed

Committee members gained valuable insight and experience during the Long Beach library test and resolution. When permission finally came through from the City of Lakewood for the Chapter to install a permanent hearing loop, they realized that they should get more bids for the job and be sure include maintenance costs. Another aspect that you readers understand all too well is that the business world operates by telephone. Contacting potential bidders, arranging visits, and gathering information is a monumental task for those of us who struggle to hear.

It has been frustrating for chapter volunteers, and at times overwhelming. It is so hard to focus on the thought that the battle will be worth it when the hearing loop is finally in place. Because none of the members can easily get on the floor to tape down a perimeter wire, chapter meetings have been without a hearing loop for more than a year.

As I work with HLAA-LB/L to go through this process, I realize that many of your chapters are probably struggling with the same thing. In order to educate myself, I am now reading through all information on the HLAA National website (www.hearingloss.org) under Get in the Hearing Loop. If your chapter is considering taking this journey, I strongly recommend starting there!

Until next time,

Katie Wright
President HLAA-CA
the first five times I used them — that would have drawn too much attention to them in my still-hiding-my-hearing-loss-stigmatized state — but I certainly was not happy about it.

Over time, I began to appreciate them, warts and all, for giving me back the ability to communicate. Like Rebecca, I had to go through my own process of acceptance. It took me many years, but I am incredibly grateful for my hearing aids today. Sometimes, I even love them.

Help Yourself Through Helping Others

Now at age 40, Rebecca continues to live in NYC and works as a psychotherapist, group fitness instructor and extreme athlete. She is the author of Not Fade Away: A Memoir of Senses Lost and Found, which will soon be made into a major motion picture. She is also an ardent advocate for people with disabilities.

Rebecca loves her advocacy work. Not only is she inspiring others to live engaging and rewarding lives despite physical challenges, she is also helping herself. I believe this is true for many advocates. I love writing this blog and interacting with my readers. When I help people feel more comfortable with their struggles, it allows me to live better with my own.

That is the power of advocacy. We all benefit from the strength and resilience of each other in ways big and small. We feel less alone and more empowered to lead our best lives. Thank you to all of you for being the advocates that you are. We are stronger for it.

Shari Eberts is a hearing health advocate, writer, and avid Bikram yogi. She serves on the Board of Trustees of HLAA. She is the former Board Chair of Hearing Health Foundation. Shari has an adult-onset genetic hearing loss and hopes that by sharing her story it will help others to live more peacefully with their own hearing issues. Follow Shari on her blog: livingwithhearingloss.com Please visit Shari’s blog to add your thoughts in the Comments section.

Do I Have a Hearing Loss?

Hearing loss is one of the most common conditions affecting older adults. Approximately one in three people between the ages of 65 and 74 has hearing loss and nearly half of those older than 75 have difficulty hearing. Having trouble hearing can make it hard to understand and follow a doctor’s advice, to respond to warnings, and to hear doorbells and alarms. It can also make it hard to enjoy talking with friends and family. All of this can be frustrating, embarrassing, and even dangerous.

Here are some questions adapted from the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD) website. Thinking carefully about the answers can help you decide if you need to see a professional for a hearing evaluation.

1. Does not being able to hear clearly cause you to feel embarrassed when you meet new people?
2. Does a hearing problem cause you to feel frustrated when talking to members of your family?
3. Do you have difficulty hearing or understanding co-workers, clients, or customers?
4. Do you feel slowed down or exhausted by making the effort to hear?
5. Does a hearing problem cause you difficulty when visiting friends, relatives, or neighbors?
6. Do you have difficulty understanding dialog in the movies or at the theater?
7. Do you have arguments with family members because they say they’ve told you something but you’re sure they didn’t?
8. Does your family say that you turn up the volume too loud when listening to TV or radio?
9. Do you feel that any difficulty with your hearing limits or hampers your personal or social life?
10. Does a hearing problem cause you difficulty when in a restaurant with relatives or friends?

If you answered "yes" to three or more of these questions, you may want to see an audiologist or otolaryngologist (ENT specialist) for a hearing evaluation.

For more information, visit the NIDCD website: https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/
Please join us!
Meet others who are facing the challenge of everyday life with a hearing loss. Meetings are free and informal. Bring a friend or family member. Everyone is welcome. Hearing loss is a daily challenge you can overcome. You do not have to face hearing loss alone.

**Find a Chapter: [www.hearinglossca.org/chapters](http://www.hearinglossca.org/chapters)**

### NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

**NorCal Chapter Coordinator**
Bob Zastrow
bzastrow@hearinglossca.org

**Diablo Valley Chapter** - Walnut Creek
Ann Thomas 925-264-1199
info@hearinglossdv.org
www.hearinglossdv.org

**East Bay Chapter** - Oakland
Dale Davis 510-221-6080
info@hearingglosseb.org
www.hearingglosseb.org

**Napa Valley Chapter** - Napa
Jeannine Scott, 707-257-0509
jneen@napanet.net

**North Bay Chapter** - Marin & Sonoma
Sara Oser, Donn Nisja, Tawna Cooley
HLAA.NBoCA@gmail.com
[www.hearinglossnorthbay.org](http://www.hearinglossnorthbay.org)

**Peninsula Chapter** - Redwood City
Sally Edwards, 650-365-4868
info@hearinglosspen.org
Bob Hall, 650-867-5256
info@hearinglosspen.org

**San Francisco Chapter**
Wendy Lee, 415-993-0686 mobile/txt
wendysfhlaa@gmail.com

**Silicon Valley Chapter** - San Jose
Lynne Kinsey, 408-265-4038
lkinsey@hearinglossca.org

**--New Chapter forming--**
**Lincoln/Roseville**
Contact Bob Zastrow for information
bzastrow@hearinglossca.org

### CENTRAL & SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

**SoCal Chapter Coordinator**
Position is open

**Central Coast Chapter** - San Luis Obispo
Noni Smith, 805-543-6955
hlaacc@gmail.com

**City of Orange Chapter**
Marla Peoples, 714-681-2494
hlac.cityoforange@gmail.com
[www.hearinglosscoo.org](http://www.hearinglosscoo.org)

**Long Beach/Lakewood Chapter**
Gail Morrison gail7go@gmail.com
562-438-0597
[www.hlaa-lb-lakewood.org](http://www.hlaa-lb-lakewood.org)

**Los Angeles Chapter** - Sherman Oaks
Jennifer Nelson
18jennelson@gmail.com
[www.HLAA-LA.org](http://www.HLAA-LA.org)

**Mission Viejo Chapter**
Tony Barrient, 949-391-9756
hlammvchapter@gmail.com
[www.hlaamv.org](http://www.hlaamv.org)

**San Diego Chapter**
Char Sivertson,
hlaasd@gmail.com
[www.hearinglosssandiego.org](http://www.hearinglosssandiego.org)

**Santa Barbara Chapter** - Santa Barbara & Ventura Counties
Katherine (Kat) Burns
kat.burns@ymail.com
[www.hlaa-sbc.org](http://www.hlaa-sbc.org)

**Santa Monica Chapter**
(Currently inactive)
Nanci Linke-Ellis 310-829-3884
nanci@linkeellis.com

**No Chapter Near You?**
Our Chapter Coordinators will help

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**Hearing Loss Resources**

**Hearing Loss Resource Specialists**

**Theodore Horton-Billard**, Los Angeles Greater LA Agency on Deafness GLAD 323-285-5306 thorton@gladin.org

**Guy Gomez**, Center on Deafness Inland Empire (CODIE), Riverside 951-801-5688 ggomez@codie.org

**Sr. Ann Rooney**, LMFT, Burlingame annrooney@sbcglobal.net

**Ann Thomas**, Walnut Creek ATomaths@hearinglossdv.org

**Lisa Mira Lawson**, LMFT, Psy.D Marriage and Family Therapist linda.lawson21@twc.com 310-454-5138

**Valerie Stern**, LCSW, Sunland Psychotherapist - hearing loss and grief, certified equine assisted psychotherapist [valeriejesternlcsw.com](http://valeriejesternlcsw.com) 310-936-0939,

**Alison Freeman**, PhD, West LA, Sherman Oaks Psychologist - hearing loss, trauma and crisis counseling, stressmgmt and teletherapy, 310–712-1200, [www.dralisonfremman.net](http://www.dralisonfremman.net)

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**The Hearing Loss Californian** - Fall 2019  13
Hearing Loss Resources

Clinics
- The HEAR Center, Pasadena
  Hearing/speech therapy, Community outreach, hearing aid dispensing. All ages, [www.hearcenter.org](http://www.hearcenter.org) 626-796-2016
- Hearing and Speech Center, San Francisco
  415-921-7658, info@hearingspeech.org [www.hearingspeech.org](http://www.hearingspeech.org)
- House Ear Clinic, Los Angeles
  Hearing Aids, Cochlear Implants, Ear surgery [www.hei.org](http://www.hei.org) 213-483-9930
- John Tracy Clinic
  Pediatric hearing loss, low cost services worldwide, [www.jfc.org](http://www.jfc.org) 213-748-5481
- Oberkotter Foundation
  Pediatric hearing loss, oral schools, free materials www.oraldeafed.org
- Providence Speech and Hearing Center
  1301 Providence Ave, Orange www.pshc.org 855-901-PSHC
- Stanford University Ear Institute
  650-736-4351 medstanford.edu/ohs/PediatricHealthcare/einstein/Stanford
- Lucille Packard Children's Hospital
  650-498-4327 Childrenshearing@stanfordchildrens.org
- UC Irvine, Cochlear implant services 714-456-5853 www.ent.uci.edu
- UC San Francisco, Audiology Clinic, 415-353-2101 Cochlear Implant Center, 415-353-2464 ucsfhealth.org/clincs/audiology
- Auditory Therapy/Rehabilitation
  Angel Sound - Free Online download: angelsound.emilyfufoundation.org Request an installation CD: angelvoice@emilyfufoundation.org
- Online Directory
  [http://hearingloss.org/content/listening-training-programs](http://hearingloss.org/content/listening-training-programs)
- Speech Therapy
- Tinnitus and Implantable Devices
  Sharzad Cohen, AuD, FAAH 5900 Sepulveda Blvd, Ste 335 Sherman Oaks 818-989-9001 AuditoryProcessingCenters.com
- Deaf/Disabled Telecomm Program/DDTP
  Katie Wright (Late Deafened) katiwrr@gmail.com Jennifer Nelson, (Hard of Hearing) jennnelson18@aol.com
- Free Telephones - California Telephone Access Program/CTAP [www.cpuc.ca.gov](http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/)
- Smartphone Classes for Seniors
  Basic Training on Smartphone Android or iPhone for Seniors with Hearing Loss. Call or email for a schedule of classes near you: 866-271-1540 smartphone training@adtp.org
- Hearing Loops

Get in The Hearing Loop
GITHUBinfo@hearingloss.org

All about Loops
[www.hearingloop.com](http://www.hearingloop.com)

LoopFinder
Find Hearing Loop enabled venues [www.loopfinder.com](http://www.loopfinder.com)

American Sign Language
Galaudet online class [https://www.gallaudet.edu/asl-connect](https://www.gallaudet.edu/asl-connect)

DeAnza College, Cupertino
[www.deanza.edu/sign](http://www.deanza.edu/sign)

Ohlone College, Fremont
[www.ohlone.edu/deafstudies/asl](http://www.ohlone.edu/deafstudies/asl)

Lip Reading Classes
Southern California:
- GLAD listing of local resources For updates call 323-478-8000 www.hearinglossca.org/communication

Glendale Community College
@ GlendaleAdulth Recreation Center 201 E Colorado St, Glendale For information: 818-240-1000 x5413 Stela Fejtek sfjejtek@glendale.edu

HLAA Long Beach/Lakewood Chapter
Wednesdays 9:30am–11:30am Weingart Senior Center 323-205-6794 5220 Oliva Ave, Lakewood

Northern California:
- Addison-Penzak Jewish Community Ctr Mondays 14855 Oka Rd, Los Gatos 408-357-7462 Contact Marcia Fariss hear@gizmology.com
- Avenidas
  Mondays 4000 Middlefield Rd, Ste I-2, Palo Alto Contact: Ellen Mastman 408-973-1352 mastmanellen@foothill.edu
- John Adams Center, City College of SF
  By Licensed Speech-Language Pathologists Mondays,12:30pm – 2:45pm 1860 Hayes, Room 109, San Francisco 415-561-1005
- Kaiser Medical Center
  (Kaiser membership NOT required) Tuesdays, 2:00pm–4:15pm 4141 Geary Blvd (at 6th Ave), San Francisco Conf Rm 3, First Floor,
- San Francisco Jewish Community Ctr
  Wednesdays 12:30pm–2:45pm 3200 California St, Room 205, San Francisco 415-292-1200
- Saratoga Senior Center
  Tuesdays 19655 Allendale, Saratoga 408-868-1254 Contact Marcia Fariss hear@gizmology.com
- Sunnyvale Senior Center
  Tuesdays 550 E Remington Dr, Sunnyvale 408-730-7360

Assistance Dogs for Deaf/HoH
- Canine Companions for Independence [www.cci.org](http://www.cci.org) 800-572-2275
- Sam Simon Foundation
  [www.samsimonfoundation.com](http://www.samsimonfoundation.com) 310-457-5898
The Hearing Loss Californian

is GREEN in 2019

Current Members of HLAA:
Receive paper copies due to membership in our national organization.
To help us by going green, please visit our website: hearinglossca.org/newsletter
Click  Sign-Up for the HLAA-CA Newsletter

Licensed Professionals:  individuals receive paper copies; clinics receive multiple copies. Outreach is a key component of our mission and we appreciate your help in spreading our message to your patients. Please make your copy of The Hearing Loss Californian available in your waiting room, and we are happy to continue to send paper copies.

Email copy free:  If you do not already receive a quarterly email with a link to the newsletter on our website, be sure to sign up for this free service at: hearinglossca.org/newsletter
Click  Sign-Up for the HLAA-CA Newsletter

Live Music & Theatre Access

Check individual theatre listings online under Accessibility
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guarantees access to persons with hearing, vision, mobility, and other disabilities.
Hearing Loss is a Leading Public Health Issue

Hearing loss is a daily challenge you can overcome.
You do not have to hide your hearing loss.
You do not have to face hearing loss alone.

Please share this information! When you’ve finished reading the Hearing Loss Californian pass it along to a friend or colleague.

To subscribe to this newsletter, go to hearinglossca.org
Under the Newsletter tab, select Sign-up for Newsletter.
Now available as an email link.

Because there were no services for hard of hearing people, Rocky Stone founded Self Help for Hard of Hearing People (SHHH) in 1979. The thinking behind the self-help philosophy for SHHH was to enhance each of us as human beings. Hearing loss is an important but secondary consideration. Once we accept responsibility for ourselves, we have to learn to love ourselves, and then, each other.
SHHH was renamed Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) in 2006. Today, HLAA is the premier consumer organization for people with hearing loss. The HLAA mission is to open the world of communication to people with hearing loss through education, advocacy and support.

Hearing Loss Association of America
The Nation’s voice for people with hearing loss

HLAA is an international, non-sectarian, educational, non-profit consumer organization of hard of hearing people, their relatives and friends.
It is devoted to the welfare and interests of those who cannot hear well but are committed to participating in the hearing world.

7910 Woodmont Avenue, Ste 1200
Bethesda, MD 20814
inquiry@hearingloss.org
301-657-2248 Voice
301-913-9413 Fax

HLAA, California State Association
Supporting chapters throughout California

HLAA-CA is a separately incorporated non-profit affiliate of HLAA.
California residents who join our national organization automatically become members of HLAA-CA.

info@hearinglossca.org
650-449-0091