

## The Official Newsletter of HLAA-PA

*Support and Advocacy since 2001 for Pennsylvanians with Hearing Loss*

### In This Issue:

[Nancy's Message](#)  
[State Happenings](#)  
[Captioning](#)  
[Conference](#)  
[About HLAA-PA](#)

### HearSay Articles

HLAA-PA welcomes articles of interest to the hearing loss community for publication in HearSay, as well as suggestions for topics. Send e-mail to [editor@hlaa-pa.org](mailto:editor@hlaa-pa.org)

### DISCLAIMER

Opinions expressed in HearSay are those of the authors. Mention of goods and services in articles and advertisements does not mean HLAA-PA endorsement, nor does absence suggest disapproval. To reach readers of HearSay, contact Dale Long

**Sponsor Coordinator**  
([long@hlaa-pa.org](mailto:long@hlaa-pa.org))  
for information

### Nancy's Message

. By Nancy Kingsley, HLAA-PA State Director  
***Why Hearing Aids Are Not Like Glasses***

People often wonder why hearing aids don't provide normal hearing in the way that glasses can provide normal vision. The reason is the difference between the usual causes of visual versus hearing difficulties.

Glasses are worn to correct nearsightedness, farsightedness, presbyopia, and astigmatism, which are all classified as "refractive errors," the most common type of vision problem. They happen when the shape of the eyeball, cornea, or lens keeps light from focusing correctly on the retina at the back of the eye. The retina is a light-sensitive layer that sends nerve impulses via the optic nerve to the brain, which forms the visual image.

Over 40% of Americans have problems seeing distant objects (nearsightedness); 80% of people between the ages of 45 and 55 have difficulty seeing objects up close due to presbyopia; and astigmatism (from problems with the shape of the cornea or lens) affects a third of the population. So these are very common conditions, and all of them can be corrected by glasses that focus light properly on the retina.

How is this different from hearing loss? More than 90% of hearing loss in adults is classified as "sensorineural," which involves varying degrees of damage to the hair cells in the inner ear's cochlea or (less commonly) to the auditory nerve. (The less common type of hearing loss is "conductive," caused by impairment of the outer or middle ear.)

The hair cells of the ear can be compared to the retinal cells of the eye, which transmit nerve impulses to the auditory or optic nerve, respectively. Neither glasses nor hearing aids can restore normal sensory function to damaged areas of nerve transmission, which is the usual cause of hearing loss but not of visual problems. This doesn't mean that hearing aids are useless, of course—it just means that they can't provide the same degree of benefit for most hearing loss that glasses can provide for the most common forms of vision problems. (As a side note, cochlear implants bypass substantially damaged hair cells by transmitting auditory information directly to the auditory nerve.)

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**State Happenings**  
**by Carolyn Meyer, Outreach Coordinator**  
**STATE HAPPENINGS**

With turmoil in our world, we at HLAA-PA are reminded of the friendships we have made and continue to build new relationships with others who share hearing loss and other misfortune. We had an exciting fall with our very successful Walk4Hearing. Many thanks to all who volunteered and worked so hard to make it a success.

**THE PA WALK4HEARING**

The 2023 PA Walk4Hearing was held on Sunday, October 15, 2023 at the Philadelphia Navy Yard and was a tremendous success. For the second year in a row, we had perfect Fall weather. The Walk4Hearing is the only nationwide event bringing attention to hearing loss and promoting the importance of hearing health. The PA Walk is one of 20 walks held across the country in the Spring and Fall.

Funds raised support HLAA's national awareness and education programs, HLAA Chapters and State Organizations, and alliances that help extend HLAA's mission into local communities. The PA Walk was the largest in 2023 and raised over \$126,000, more than any of the other events. The Walk is a fun-filled family event and had numerous activities for the children in addition to free food and drinks. The newest vendor, Bonefish Grille, provided free grilled salmon for all attendees. Hearing loss exhibitors included hearing aid and cochlear implant companies, representatives from the healthcare community and an onsite Hearing Screening van provided by Salus University where anyone could get a free hearing screening. This year's guest speaker was Barbara Kelley, the Executive Director of HLAA, who travelled up from D.C. to join the festivities and greet the walkers. Next year's Walk will be on Sunday October 20, 2024 at the Navy Yard.

Mark your calendars now so that you don't miss a fun and uplifting event!

**CHAPTERS IN THE NEWS**



Holidays are a time to socialize and relax. All chapters welcome new members and family or friends. Some require you to RSVP so please make sure you do.

ChesCo Social: December 15 from 5-7 PM. Timothy's Restaurant, Banquet Room, 929 South High Street, West Chester, PA. RSVP hlaacchesco@gmail.com. Appetizers and beverages will be served with good conversation between others with similar interests.

MontCo Annual Holiday Party December 5 at 5:30 PM Jeanes Library. Members, family and friends are invited to a potluck dessert evening. Please RSVP to indicate how many people will attend and what you will bring. hlaamcc@gmail.com Coffee provided.

The All Gen chapter is planning a Valentine's Party Saturday, February 17, 2024 in the Media Borough Hall, 301 North Jackson Street, Media, PA. 5:30-9:00 PM. Pizza, salad, and drinks will be provided at no cost. Please bring a dish to share. If your last name starts from A-L, please bring an appetizer; if your last name begins with M-Z, please bring a dessert. If you wish to participate in a Red (White) Elephant Game, please bring a valentine-themed wrapped gift under \$20.00. RSVP by February 13 to Melissa melred78@yahoo.com. .

Many chapters do not meet in January and February so please check their contact information on [www.hlaa-pa.org](http://www.hlaa-pa.org)

## **DONATIONS OF USED EQUIPMENT: COCHLEAR IMPLANT PROCESSORS AND HEARING AIDS**

This time of year we are asked to donate and many of you have gently used and not abused equipment no longer needed. The equipment is sanitized and refurbished to give to those in need.

Hearing Aids: Mail to: HLA A Chester County, P O Box 1371, West Chester, PA 19380-0027

Cochlear Implant Processors: Cochlear Implant Awareness Foundation(CIAF), ATTN: Donations, 830 South Grand Ave West, Springfield, IL 62704. Enclose an approximate value of the donation considering its depreciation over time. Enclose any additional accessories used with the processor.

### **SPECIAL PEOPLE TO THANK IN 2023**

To Judy Shugarts, secretary of the ChesCo chapter, who has been sending us emails all year to provide the list of captioned movies in parts of state. They include descriptions of the movies. If you want to be part of that email subscriber list contact hlaachesco@gmail.com. Judy, we thank you as captioned movies are back again and many are not aware of this. Other theatres still have accessibility devices.

To Don Groff, our webmaster and active member of the MontCo chapter, for his rapid responses to our inquiries and help with questions of technology often over our heads!

### **ONE DAY HEARING LOSS CONFERENCE: SAVE THE DATE APRIL 13, 2024**

You don't want to miss this day! Those who attended last year are excited that we are planning this event once again. The one day conference is sponsored by HLA A SE PA Chapters. It will be at the St. David's Episcopal Church, 763 South Valley Forge Road, Wayne, PA 19087. Time: 9:00 AM -3:00 PM. The featured speaker will be Barbara Kelley, Executive Director of HLA A. Additional Speakers will be announced. The event will be fully accessible. Any questions, please contact Mike Miles: mikemiles\_19087@yahoo.com

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## **Captioning Made Easy**

Swift advances in the area of artificial intelligence known as automatic speech recognition (ASR or automatic captioning), have been a huge benefit to the hearing loss community. Here is a review of some of the technology that has been found especially useful.

ASR software is readily available for smartphones, tablets, laptops, and desktops. One example, Google Live Transcribe (GLT), has many fans due to its features, accuracy, and price; it is totally free. But the GLT app is readily available only for the Android platform, although there are workarounds for other systems. Users of Windows and iPhone/iPads have a wide range of choices, such as Otter and Fireflies. Many have free versions with limited capabilities, and paid versions are often in the \$10/month range.

The good news is that the popular Chromebook laptops can run Android software, including GLT. Chromebooks (which can cost as little as \$200) are similar to Windows laptops but only run the Chrome operating system. You'll almost certainly want a larger display than the laptop's. Most Chromebooks have an HDMI output, either directly or via a simple adapter that can be used to send the text to a projector or a large monitor.

Another concern is supplying the sound to the Chromebook. It will invariably have a

built-in microphone, but that will probably not be satisfactory for most situations. Remember that the gold standard for hearing assistance is to have the sound picked up directly from its source. The simplest enhancement is a USB plug-in microphone with a long enough cable to reach the sound source. USB connections have become ubiquitous and are more easily managed than older analog 1/8-inch connections, which are disappearing from newer equipment.

A cordless microphone is the next step up. Here too there is a wide range of solutions. There are microphones that work with the Bluetooth function provided in almost all laptops, an uncomplicated arrangement. Others may require a separate receiver for the transmitting microphone, which might be as simple as a USB port plug-in for the laptop. This is the case with a widely available Behringer wireless microphone.

If you are fortunate enough to be working with a venue having a hearing loop system, it is possible to supply its signal directly to the laptop instead of using a microphone. You'll need an old-fashioned telephone pickup coil (they're still available) and an audio-to-USB adapter for the laptop. These are in the \$10 price range. The USB adapter often carries a Sabrent label.

Device technology will continue to evolve, of course, but many new solutions to old problems are within reach.

-Don Groff

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### **Support Legislation about Hearing Aid Cost**

HAAA-PA learned of the notice below requesting support for proposed Pennsylvania legislation to require insurers to cover hearing aids. Please either follow through at the link provided or contact your state representative directly.

State Rep. Liz Hanbidge has reintroduced legislation to require insurers to cover prescribed hearing aids in Pennsylvania. The legislation, HB 1609, was introduced on August 8, 2023, and is now in the House Insurance Committee. We are asking all PA members, patients, and other audiology advocacy groups to contact their local Representatives, using both your home and office addresses using the link below, to ask for their support. Rep. Hanbidge and her colleague, Rep. Joe Hohenstein, have been in conversations with interested parties prior to the introduction of this bill, and we believe we have a strong chance of passage, but we need your help. Please send the prepared email, which you are encouraged to modify, to add your own personal experience with your or your patients' struggles with affording hearing care. We also need you to forward any responses you get from your legislators, so we know where they stand.

#### **Contact Your Local Representative**

<https://www.voterve.net/WannerAssoc/Campaigns/100076/Respond>

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#### **About HAAA and its State Office, HAAA-PA**

The Hearing Loss Association of America (HAAA), founded in 1979, is the nation's foremost membership and advocacy organization for people with hearing loss. HAAA opens the world of communication to people with hearing loss by providing information, education, support and

advocacy. The national support network includes the Washington, DC area office, 14 state organizations, and 200 local chapters. HLAA is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

Hearing Loss Association of America  
6116 Executive Blvd., Suite 320  
Rockville, MD 20852

HLAA-PA is the all-volunteer state office of Hearing Loss Association of America. We were established *in 2001 to carry out the mission of HLAA for Pennsylvanians with hearing loss, their families and friends.*

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**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!!**

Assist the HLAA-PA State Director by serving on the Advisory Council or one of its committees. The Council meets periodically at locations convenient to its membership. But committees conduct most of their business by e-mail and occasionally meet in various parts of the state. If you think you would like to serve on the council or any of its committees, please contact one of the state leaders listed here:

State Director: Nancy Kingsley (kingsley@hlaa-pa.org)  
Editor: HearSay and HLAA-PA Website Don Groff (groff@hlaa-pa.org)  
Advocacy: Nancy Kingsley, Chair (kingsley@hlaa-pa.org)  
Sponsor Coordinator: Dale Long (long@hlaa-pa.org)  
Outreach Coordinator: Carolyn Meyer, Chair (meyer@hlaa-pa.org)  
ALD Demo Kit: Bill Best, Chair (best@hlaa-pa.org)  
Chapter Coordinators: Mike Miles, Eastern PA (miles@hlaa-pa.org), Dale Long, Central PA (long@hlaa-pa.org), Teresa Nellans, Western PA (nellans@hlaa-pa.org)

**Link to online version: [tiny.cc/HearSay20234](http://tiny.cc/HearSay20234)**

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