Upcoming Events:

HLA-Wake March Meeting: Kim Calabretta will present the program on “CapTel NC- the Past, Present and Future of captioning” at our March meeting. Note the NEW LOCATION!

Time: 7:00 pm
Place: Cary Senior Center in Bond Park
Here’s a Map.

May – Meeting at Glenaire in Cary: Date to be determined. This program will be presented to HLA members and Glenaire residents jointly. The topic is Looping and will be held in a looped room at Glenaire.

No meeting in June: Plan to attend the National Convention.

2012 NC-Walk4Hearing

SAVE THE DATE!
For our second North Carolina Walk4Hearing on October 13, 2012. The location will be lovely Tanglewood Park, just outside of Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

Several Wake members will be helping with sponsors, affiliates, teams, advertising etc. If you can help, let us know.

Sponsors are needed. If you know of some organization or business that might consider being a Sponsor, please email the Sponsorship chair, Kathy Borzell at kborzell@gmail.com.

Affiliates are needed. If you know of some non-profit or church that would like to participate, please email the Affiliate chair, Janet, at jmcsgettrick@nc.rr.com. Affiliate groups can share in the walk income if they agree to use their funds to benefit hearing loss causes.

Walkers & Teams are needed. Start planning to form a team and walk. Details coming soon.

HLAA National Convention

The 2012 HLAA National Convention is scheduled for 21-24 June in Providence Rhode Island. Registration is open at www.hearingloss.org/content/convention

Top-notch speakers from across the country will be on-hand to present workshops which are divided into the following tracks:

- Advocacy
- Assistive & Other Technology
- Hearing Aids & Cochlear Implants
- Relationships and Communication

The HLAA National Conference always has fantastic programs, and the vendor exhibit area is always my favorite place.

And with a thousand or more people with hearing loss in a great convention hotel is a great a great chance to meet or make friends who understand.

Who Should Be Involved

People with hearing loss, their family, friends and hearing health care professionals are encouraged to participate Hearing Loss Association of Wake County. Make the most of your hearing.

Meeting Accessibility

We have a Loop system for people with telecoils. When State budgets permit, we will also have a Computer Assisted Note taker so everyone can “hear”.

What Else Should We Do?

Any suggestions on what other things we might do as a group? Here are some ideas:

1) Attend a captioned (or silent) movie and go out for pizza?
2) Take a docent lead tour of the NC Art Museum with ALDs available?

Let us know what’s on your mind.

Hearing Loss Stories

Our HLA-Wake newsletter now has extra pages.

Don’t miss “Movies and ALDs” by member, Steve Barber, in this issue. Just scroll down and enjoy.

If you’ve written something you can share, please email it to steve.barber@earthlink.net and with your permission we may be able to include it in a future Wake Chapter Newsletter.

Stories can be short “Bios” or can just be a short story or article about hearing loss.

HLA Wake Contacts

Steve: steve.barber@earthlink.net
Janet: jmcsgettrick@nc.rr.com
Or 919-469-0924

Check out the HLA-NC web Site: www.nchearingloss.org
This article was first published on both Audiology On-Line and on Hearing Loss Web. The article was written by Steve Barber, who is a hard of hearing consumer and a long term member of Hearing Loss Association of America. The article covers the problems and opportunities for improving Assistive Listening Systems that are now common in movie theaters. It suggests actions on the part of the various stakeholders that will improve the situation. The article should be of interest to consumers, professionals, movie producers and distributors of movies and managers of movie theaters.

As consumers it can help us to understand who the stakeholders are and what their concerns are. But we also must understand our role as stakeholders. When you go to the movies, do you ask for an assistive device? If you don’t you’re giving the other stakeholders ammunition to avoid providing assistive technology for people with hearing loss.

Did you know that there are new options being tested now that may replace current assistive listening and captioning options at movies. Digital movie projectors (instead of film) are becoming the standard, and that means captions and audio can be broadcast to personal receivers … captions may soon be displayed by special glasses.

**ALDs and Movies: Missed Opportunities and How to Overcome Them**

Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs) are fairly common in America’s movie theaters, thanks to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Although significant progress has been made, problems and opportunities remain.

**What’s the Problem?**

Even though the majority of movie theaters now offer ALDs for their customers, very few people with hearing loss use or know about ALD equipment. Unfortunately, many people with hearing aids cannot “couple” their hearing aids to the available ALDs as they have not purchased “FM” or “direct audio input” or “telecoil” options for their hearing aids. Sometimes, people with “compatible” hearing aids don’t know how to patch together the ALD and the hearing aids. So the bottom line is, the equipment is usually available to satisfy the letter of the law (the ADA), but the practical knowledge is lacking.

**What’s the Goal?**

The goal is to help hard of hearing people hear. This can be accomplished in movie theaters and accomplishing this goal has many benefits….more hard of hearing people would attend movies, ALDs would become a good investment for movie theaters, hard of hearing people would understand the benefit of ALDs in other venues (houses of worship, restaurants, automobiles, airplanes, meetings etc.), hearing professionals and hard of hearing people would understand, order and use options currently available for hearing aids (FM systems, direct audio input, telecoils etc).

**StakeHolders:**

There are several major stakeholders that have interests and potential opportunities in the success of ALDs in movies and other venues too.
A- Movie theater owners and operators
B- Hard of hearing consumers (patients, family and friends)
C- ALD manufacturers and distributors
D- Hearing Aid Manufacturers and Hearing Healthcare Professionals.
E- Movie audio producers and distributors.

If you have a “Hearing Loss Story” you can share, please email it to steve.barber@earthlink.net and with your permission we may be able to include it in a future Wake Chapter Newsletter.
Improving the way movie theaters support customers is important. Although most theaters have ALDs, many theaters don’t understand what a good business opportunity they’re missing. They don’t just fail to promote this wonderful service for their customers; they sometimes seem to go out of their way to hide it! Here are some suggestions for movie theater owners and operators:

1. Turn down the volume. That may sound like the wrong thing to do to help people with hearing loss, but it’s the right thing to do. Some movies are so loud that it’s uncomfortable. Noise is one of the biggest problems people with hearing loss have. If you don’t have hearing loss, it’s hard to understand that most people with hearing loss are less tolerant of high volume sounds, and loud sounds often sound distorted to ears that are not working normally.

2. Put an “ALD” symbol in your newspaper ads. In most cities, your theater ads would stand out if the ads noted “ALDs available.” I recommend you use the standard ALD icon of the ear with the slash through it. Your local paper may be willing to write an article about your ALD support, and that too, might bring you additional business.

3. Display an ALD symbol beside each ticket seller.

4. Make it convenient to obtain the ALD. People don’t want to hold up the line where they’re buying tickets. I recommend ALDs be available at a convenient desk in the lobby, not a dusty box in the back room! Of course, make sure the ALDs are in good working order with fresh batteries and make sure the staff knows how to operate them.

5. Place a poster about available ALDs in the lobby. This is a terrific place to remind your customers you care about them, and you want them want to come back because they hear better in your theater!

6. Provide a brochure or card with instructions with each ALD. People who haven’t used them before need basic information; how to turn them on, how to adjust the volume, how to confirm they’re working, and how to use them with their hearing aids. They need to know where to get help, if there’s a problem.

7. Turn on the transmitters! The receivers won’t work unless the transmitter is on – and this has been a common problem. Please broadcast sound in each theater between and before the movie starts, so your customers can confirm their ALD is on, and they can adjust it to a proper level before the movie starts. There’s plenty of time to resolve problems before the movie starts! Between shows, you can broadcast previews, advertisements, or an audio test pattern that only people with an ALD will hear (possibly, spoken information on how to hear best with the ALDs).

8. Contact your local HLAA group. They may be able to help you with advertising, publicity, training and consumer awareness.

9. Some people have sophisticated hearing aids and ALDs of their own. For them, having “interface” equipment available is a big plus! For example, “neckloops” are telecoil signal receivers that are much larger than the tiny T-coil with the hearing aid. Often, neckloops can be plugged into hearing aids equipped with T-coils -- for even better reception. Many telecoil compatible hearing aids don’t “hear” telecoil signals well, but those same systems work very well with a neckloop.

10. Many people have their own FM transmitters used with tiny FM receivers in their hearing aids. If your ALDs have a standard female miniplug on them, users could plug in their most effective user interface; a neckloop, silhouettes, Direct Audio Interface or an FM transmitter.

If you have a “Hearing Loss Story” you can share, please email it to steve.barber@earthlink.net and with your permission we may be able to include it in a future Wake Chapter Newsletter.
11. Make sure you’re buying your ALDs and having them installed by someone who knows about hearing loss ... not just about the ADA and not just about audio. If they can’t explain how the ALD will serve people with mild losses through severe losses, then you’ve got the wrong supplier or contractor. Here’s a tip to help you know whether they understand: Ask them about neckloops, DAI, and silhouettes. If they say “You don’t need those” or “I don’t know,” look for someone who knows what they’re doing!

12. Encourage patrons to bring their own compatible receivers. As more and more people become sophisticated hearing aid and ALD users, they will be able to bring their own receivers and their most effective user interface and simply use your transmitted signal. You’ll make these more sophisticated users happy and you won’t need to loan them your ALD receiver.

13. You might negotiate with your ALD supplier to place a poster in your lobby or an ad in your ALD brochures about the ALD supplier. Perhaps some of them would like to buy their own personal ALDs to use in the theater, with their TV, phones, at meetings, in the car, or in restaurants.

14. Offer specials to groups likely to have people with hearing loss. Perhaps a discount for “off nights” if they will try your ALDs. Perhaps a “reception” and introduction to your ALD technology. Groups to consider include; senior centers, retirement communities, assisted living homes and hearing loss support groups like HLAA (find local chapters through www.hearingloss.org).

15. Prepare a PowerPoint presentation about your ALD products and services to help customers hear as well as they can. Offer to give your presentation at those same groups ... such meetings are a good place to offer your discount tickets, or to hand out some tickets as door prizes.

16. Offer a “Hear Better at the Movies” night. Invite people with hearing loss to see a free movie and your presentation about ALDs. Obviously, do this on a night when you wouldn’t lose any paying customers.

B. Hard of Hearing Consumers

One important concept, and a key to maximizing “residual hearing” is to realize that hard of hearing consumers, themselves, have a responsibility to do all they can too! It’s not just up to others to help – you must help yourself too! Many hard of hearing people have to overcome a history of hearing loss denial, and they must re-focus to educate themselves about how to be good (or great) at having hearing loss. It can be done -- It’s a skill and an attitude. Embrace suggestions that make a real difference in your life. These are things YOU (the hard of hearing person) can do; no one else can do them for you. It’s not a matter of “the audiologist didn’t sell it to me,” or the “hearing aid dispenser didn’t tell me...” It has a lot to do with acceptance of products and services by the end user (see section B.1 below). Hearing aid manufacturers offer amazing products, and the professionals would be pleased to have you ask for, desire or gratefully accept these products, because let’s face it, it helps pay the bills! But if you treat the professionals like used car salesman when they offer to tell you about T-coils, ALDs, directional microphones, etc., they probably get pretty frustrated! Imagine selling products that few people admit to needing, few people want to use and no one wants to pay for! The professionals and the manufacturers really have the tools and the knowledge available to help you....but you have to allow them to provide it to you!

If you have a “Hearing Loss Story” you can share, please email it to steve.barber@earthlink.net and with your permission we may be able to include it in a future Wake Chapter Newsletter.
1. You have hearing loss. Deal with it and get over it!

2. Go to an audiologist for a full audiometric evaluation, not a hearing screening! It’s time to do it right. Get the whole evaluation and review the results in detail with your personal audiologist. Bring your “significant other” to the audiology appointment. You do not hear well! It will be useful for you to have your significant other there to help hear, understand and manage the situation. You should leave the audiologist’s office understanding your hearing loss in terms of your degree (normal, mild, moderate, severe, profound) of hearing loss and the type of hearing loss (sensorineural or conductive) and you should have an understanding of pure tones, how well you understand speech, how well you hear in noise, whether your eardrum and middle ear is functioning correctly and whether there are other factors involved. If you need a medical referral you will get one, and if you need assistive listening devices or hearing aids, they will be recommended. Review step one (“You have hearing loss. Deal with it and get over it.”). Ask the audiologist to WRITE down the results and recommendations, and to give you a copy to keep, and a copy for your physician.

3. See your doctor. A small percentage of hearing loss can be “medically or surgically corrected” and some types of hearing loss can be a sign of other problems that need medical attention to prevent more serious problems.

4. Get the hearing aid (and assistive listening device) technology you need to hear your best. Your first consideration should be how to maximize your hearing, not how to get the cheapest or smallest or most “invisible” hearing aid! Remember, even the largest hearing aid is less visible than your hearing loss! People don’t really care whether you have hearing loss or not or whether you wear a hearing aid. They do care (and notice) if you aren’t hearing well. Pretending to hear when you are indeed missing things, looks pretty silly.

5. Learn about the features in hearing aids to couple them with ALDs, to help you hear in difficult situations and with telephones, TVs, computers, and movies. Make sure your next hearing aid includes the right features. You need to know enough about hearing aid features and ALDs. Choose a hearing healthcare provider that can help you choose your hearing aids and ALDs wisely.

6. Learn how to use your hearing aid and ALDs and practice strategies that help you hear your best. Hearing aids are not like glasses - you can’t just put them on and have perfect hearing. You have to get used to hearing the sounds you’ve been missing and you’ll need to learn to use amplification features to your advantage.

Join HLAA (www.hearingloss.org) if possible. It’s one of the best places to learn the things you need to know. It’s only $35 per year to belong to the most influential and informative organization for people with hearing loss.

When you go to the movies, ask for the ALDs. Get there early so there’s time to get the ALD and to get ready to use it. Make sure to thank the theater and tell them you appreciate being able to hear the movie better. If they hear that enough, they’ll realize that their ALDs can be good business.

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**Continuing Movies and ALDs**

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**C. ALD Manufacturers, Distributors and Contractors**

Most movie theater ALDs are developed by large manufacturers of FM or infrared transmitters and receivers. They may be purchased directly from the manufacturer, or through a distributor. They are frequently installed and maintained by local contractors.

Whether you’re an ALD manufacturer, a distributor or a contractor, there are certain things you might consider.

1. A good ALD should offer coupling alternatives to meet the needs of your customers. Headsets are nice for mild and moderate losses, but simply won’t work for severe and profound and high frequency losses. Headsets should not only be hearing aid compatible (emit a magnetic signal that a telecoil can receive), they should have a standard 3.5 mm female jack so users can install neckloops, DAIIs, or Silhouettes. Many customers with hearing loss carry their own personal favorite coupling device. Every theater should have at least a few compatible interfaces and should offer a few neckloops for people that prefer them.

2. ALDs should make it easy to tell the battery level. Weak or dead batteries are a major problem. When a customer gets an ALD with a dead battery or one that fails during the show, the customer becomes very annoyed!

3. Cosmetics matter! Newer designs that look more like high tech toys are helping make hearing aids and ALDs more of a fashion statement, rather than an embarrassment.

4. ALDs should avoid “conspicuous” designs and should NOT draw attention to themselves! Many people still attempt to hide their hearing loss. The last thing they want is something that will draw attention to them and their hearing loss. One popular ALD headset found in movie theaters today, has a RED LIGHT on the top of the headband. HELLO, is anyone home? The red light tells the people who give out the headsets the ALD is on and the battery is working, and that’s great. However, if you told me it was designed by someone who NEVER experienced hearing loss, or had to use the product, I’d believe it.

5. Make ALDs so amazingly good that even people with normal hearing will want them. Hearing assistance technology will eventually become common for people with normal hearing. Rock stars, sports coaches, and even people on the street are using ear appliances for audio players and telephones. There will be a much broader market for ALDs in the future. The manufacturer that figures out how to design products for the entire market will have a huge advantage. The concept of Universal Design broadens your marketplace and helps the largest number of people.

6. If you’re a contractor, don’t just sell and install equipment ... sell complete solutions. Please offer posters, brochures, training packages and continuing service/support contracts. These may be almost as important to the success of the ALDs as the equipment, itself. You have a strong interest in making the ALDs a success, and these things can help assure success.

ALD manufacturers could start working with movie producers to build ALD features that allow end users to control the balance between dialog and other sounds via multi-track audio, or perhaps with noise canceling headset technology too.

*Continued on Next Page*
**D. Hearing Aid Manufacturers and Hearing Healthcare Professionals**

Hearing aid manufacturers and all healthcare professionals play an important part in this story. So, here are some things they might consider....

1. Never advertise hearing aids using verbiage such as... “So small no one will know you’re wearing them.” The message it sends is “You don’t want hearing aids.” Sorry, but this is just the wrong message to send!

2. Never design or sell a hearing aid with automatic features that can’t be overridden. It’s true that automatic features (such as automatic volume control, noise reduction or telecoils invocation) are great for people who are unable to manage those items themselves. However, savvy hearing aid users (and we’re getting more savvy every day) will not buy hearing aids that can’t be controlled manually to cope with varying conditions (like coupling with ALDs in movies).

3. Please make sure customers who could benefit from telecoils, DAI, ALDs etc., are aware of those features and encourage them to consider them. Too many hearing aid users are missing these benefits, and these benefits make all the difference in the world.

When you sell hearing aids with telecoils, always demonstrate the T-coil function with a decent ALD. Your customers will be amazed at how great a telecoil can be in noise. If you get them hooked on ALDs, you can be sure they’ll investigate DAIs and booted FM systems too!

**E. Movie Audio Producers and Distributors**

There are a few things you can to help, but the future offers even greater opportunity for you to improve the situation, especially as digital distribution becomes more common.

1. Stop hiding the dialog in music and background and sound effects! Any audiologist will tell you that for maximal speech perception, the dialogue needs to be some 30 dB louder than the background noise. Please take heed!!!! Even the best ALDs may not help hard of hearing people when the entire soundtrack is filled with rumble and roar, music and noise, or when dialog is intentionally whispered or mumbled.

2. In the future, supply soundtracks for movies in multiple tracks, so individual customers (even customers with good hearing) can choose how to balance the sound effects, music and background noise with the dialog.

3. Digital distribution of movies (both picture and audio) will offer opportunities to help people with hearing loss and will require coordination with ALD manufacturers so their receivers can handle the two (or more) audio streams.

Finally, digital distribution and some cooperation with the receiver industry offers the promise of captioned movies visible only to those who want them. While that’s not about ALDs in movies, it’s an important thing to prepare for.

*Continued on Next Page*
Continuing Movies and ALDs

The Bottom Line
ALDs offer an opportunity, and they hold promise for all! I like to tell people that there’s never a good time to have hearing loss, but there has never been a better time to have hearing loss. If we all work at it, the future will be wonderful, indeed ... and I’ll see you at the movies.

What’s new on the horizon? Theaters are currently experimenting with wireless displays that can be positioned using a cup-holder gooseneck (like the RWC reflector approach). And we’re starting to see prototypes of glasses that can display captions wirelessly. These new wireless solutions may have their problems, too, but they do offer the potential that every showing of movies that are distributed digitally (soon to be the norm) can be Closed Captioned. That might trump any problems the wireless solutions might have. Stay tuned!

Bio
Steve Barber has gradually lost most of his hearing over the last 25 years. He’s retired from IBM and currently working as a software tester for SAS Inc. Steve has been a volunteer/leader in Hearing Loss Association of America for 14 years and he served as the chairperson for the North Carolina Council for Deaf and Hard of Hearing people during 4 of his 10 year tenure with that council. He built and maintains the HLA-NC web site at www.nchearingloss.org and the Beyond-Hearing web site at www.nchearingloss.org.

If you have a “Hearing Loss Story” you can share, please email it to steve.barber@earthlink.net and with your permission we may be able to include it in a future Wake Chapter Newsletter.