Hearing Loss Association of America is the largest non-profit for people with hearing loss in the world. The Wake Chapter meets in the Raleigh/Cary area. Meetings are free and open to the public. Come and learn how you can make the most of your hearing (or how you can help).

Our Next HLA-Wake Program Meeting is planned for March 14, 2013 at the Cary Senior Center located in Bond Park at 120 Maury Odell Place, Cary with convenient parking. Soup and Chili will be served during a social hour beginning at 6:00 p.m. Soup and Chili will be served for a social hour. Our program, "Security and Safety Issues and Awareness for Hard of Hearing Individuals" will begin promptly at 7:00 p.m. We will be joined by the current DSDHH Emergency Preparedness Coordinator and other Public Safety officials to learn how to be successful at staying safe and secure when challenged with hearing loss, along with tips and opportunities for self-advocacy.

We hope to see you there at 6:00 for the social and 7:00 for the meeting.

Outgoing President

A huge vote of thanks are due to Janet McGettrick. Janet is “retiring” as our long term President and leader of our board. Her most recent term has been several years but you may not know she has served several prior terms over more than the last 20 years.

Over much of that time, Janet has been the mainstay that has held the HLAA-Wake Chapter together and that’s helped so many in people in Wake County with hearing loss.

Never fear, though, Janet will continue to be a major part of our Wake chapter. She’s agreed to serve as secretary and primary phone contact for the chapter.

Welcome New President

We are indeed fortunate to be able to welcome Tim Boyd as our new President. Although Tim had normal hearing just 2 years ago, he’s now an experienced, savvy bi-lateral CI user. In just two short years he’s become an avid HLAA member and has enthusiastically learned how to make the most of the opportunity to hear again.

He’s thrown himself into HLAA as a presenter, a board member of our local chapter, and now is also the Vice President of the HLAA-NC state-level association.

There’s a great article about Tim and his Walk4Hearing team on the Walk4Hearing web site. If you haven’t seen it, do read it now.

Free CapTel Newsletter

If you’d like to receive a free quarterly newsletter about Relay NC and Captel captioned phone service, you can sign up by clicking here.

Who Should Be Involved

People with hearing loss, their family, friends and hearing healthcare professionals are encouraged to participate in the Hearing Loss Association of Wake County. We invite you to come and join us … and make the most of your hearing.

Other Changes

The HLAA-Wake board met and decided that Wake chapter will have 4 program meetings per year, with each being planned by a team of volunteers. The March meeting planning co-chairs are Deborah Stroud, and Julie Bishop. Susan Goldner and Joyce Adler are providing the food.

It was also decided that officers would serve 2 year terms with an option for a second 2 year term. The goal is to grow more leaders and prevent officers from feeling their terms were “a life sentence”.

Next Year’s NC Wk4Hearing

Dr. Adele Evans, who led this year’s NC Walk4Hearing has already reserved Tanglewood Park for October 2013, so if you’d like to be a part of making our next NC Walk4Hearing a success, the opportunity is there for you. It’s fun and something you can be proud of.

HLA Wake Contacts

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In the early years of my life, hearing aids were in their infancy. My first hearing aid was bigger than a box of cigarettes and much heavier. A wire ran from the box to one ear where a heavy metal button attached to the earmold. No one wore two aids. One was cumbersome enough and two were not deemed important by the audiologists of the day. Hearing aids were like old radios with a narrow band of sound. You heard mainly the middle pitches of sound, excluding the highs and lows. The hearing aids of the day truly produced a lot of unclear speech sounds. And, that wasn’t the only thing that stood in the way of understanding speech. I went through life hearing thump, thump, swish, swish, shhhh. The thumping noise was my finger flicking the aid to resuscitate it. That strategy might also diminish the static noise, the shhhh sound. The swishing sound was clothing noise. I wore the aid on a harness much like a bra under my clothes. Every time I moved, the microphone picked up the sound of the cloth scraping against the hearing aid.

In spite of the poor quality of the early hearing aid and the swishing issue, I did benefit from using it. I readily put it on as I dressed every morning. When I was about 8 years old, my bratty younger cousin, Paul, was curious and persuaded me to put my earmold in his ear. He got a pained look on his face and exclaimed that it sounded like a terribly bad radio. I didn’t believe the little stinker. I was furious with him for I thought it sounded just fine. I’d never heard anything better. That was the last time I let him or anybody else listen with my hearing aid. As a child, I could not imagine a future that would reveal new, unheard sounds - clear, beautiful sounds of speech, music and the environment every time I upgraded to new and better hearing aids over a lifetime.

Even though I was born with a hearing loss, it wasn’t detected until I was 4. It was common to discover a hearing loss in a hard of hearing child during preschool years or later. My hearing test at age 4 revealed a moderate, bilateral, sensorineural hearing loss, cause unknown. Bilateral means a hearing loss in both ears. With a moderate loss I missed many speech sounds in all the frequencies. The hair cells of the cochlea in the inner ear were damaged. Hearing aids and speech therapy were prescribed. Even if I were born today with that degree and type of hearing loss, hearing aids and speech therapy would be the audiologist’s recommendation. But, back in those days, many children with my degree of hearing loss along with speech and language delays were sent away to live in residential schools for the deaf. I feel lucky that my parents chose to raise me in a hearing world even though the educational journey wasn’t easy.
Learning to read in a neighborhood school can be difficult even today for the average child with normal hearing. It was even more so for me as a hearing impaired child, especially since my world sounded like thump, thump, swish, swish, shhhh. I remember my first day of school. I cherish an old picture of me in a fresh, new dress, new bookbag, a new hearing aid hidden beneath my dress, and a bright smile on my face as I walked out the front door of my home and into a traumatic school experience. I arrived in front of the school building near the school bell and waited with a tight mass of kids of all ages, grades 1 through 8, hanging around, anticipating the ringing of the first bell of the new school year. When it rang I was stunned by its loudness and stood rooted to my spot. The crowd surged ahead and knocked me off my feet. I managed to get up unharmed, collect my bookbag and enter the hostile world of education.

I don’t remember my teacher or the other students in that first grade class. It’s not that I don’t have a good memory of those early years. I do remember my teacher at the Preschool for the Deaf that I attended in my hometown. I even remember her name, Miss Hattie Harold. I recall sitting on her lap and putting my hand on her throat to feel the vibrations of her voice as she taught me to speak. Those warm, fuzzy memories of early childhood were in stark contrast to my 1st grade memories of long rows of wooden desks scraping on hard wood floors and high ceilings echoing the noises of the classroom. The noises came from the teacher mumbling God-knows-what and the students jabbering in a seemingly foreign language. As the day progressed I felt a bit ill as I took in the sensory overload and unintelligible speech while seated at my desk in the middle of the big room.

Lunch time should have been a break from the clamor of the classroom and a chance to get to know my fellow classmates. Instead, the noise was magnified. The cafeteria was full of children all talking loudly in order to be heard. Metal food trays and glass milk bottles banged and clanged. That was enough to really make me sick. I threw up and was sent home to peace and quiet at last.

Continued on Next Page
I settled into a daily school routine, including getting sick and going home early. This quickly led to a full blown case of school phobia. I fought with all the stubbornness I could muster to keep from going to school every morning. Since a good education was a high priority with my parents, they fought equally hard to get me out the door and into the classroom. Every morning we fought a hard battle.

After a month or so, my parents wearied of this mighty struggle and sought the school’s help. The school psychologist administered tests but couldn’t detect any abnormalities in my cognitive ability. My parents were then told that I needed to stay home for the rest of that year and try again the next fall. Staying home for a year with no educational opportunity was not what my parents wanted for me. Instead of following that advice, they enrolled me in a private kindergarten for the rest of the year. There I adapted well to the small class and enjoyed the rest of the school year.

My wise parents knew I would continue to have trouble in a large, noisy classroom the next fall. They were aware that there was no support available in the neighborhood schools for hearing impaired students. Fortunately, they could afford private education. So, for the rest of my school days I attended private schools where I was able to get a good education that prepared me adequately for college. Also, I was able to develop close friendships and enjoy a full social life during my childhood days. I attribute my school success to the small class size that was possible through private schools and the modifications that my parents insisted on such as sitting near the teacher.

In spite of a rocky start in school, I eventually graduated from college and got a master’s degree in education. I added on to my teacher’s certificate in several special teaching areas so I was enrolled in college classes most of my professional life. After teaching for 40 years I retired from teaching in the Wake County Public School System’s Hearing Impaired Program. For many years I treasured being part of the school’s IEP meetings where a team of teachers, parents, therapists, specialists and administrators shared their insights and evaluations in order to come up with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) to help each child succeed in their classrooms. What a rewarding experience for me for I remember long ago the school system that merely said, “Keep her home. Try again next year.”

Janet McGetterick