



Wake Chapter Newsletter February 2022

Websites: [Wake Chapter](#) [HLAA-NC](#) [HLAA National](#)

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Upcoming Meetings and Events

<p>Wake Chapter Virtual Meeting Thursday Feb 24th 7 p.m.</p>	<p>Join us online for a virtual Wake Chapter meeting. Steve Latus and Steve Barber will present Coming Attractions: The Promise of Bluetooth Low Energy. There are many new features currently proposed by the Bluetooth Special Interest Group (SIG) that may change audio streaming in dramatic and positive ways. You'll want to be aware of what might happen over the next few years, so you'll be a savvy shopper when new features appear.</p> <p>Attending our virtual meetings is easy. We use Zoom, and will send a brief email with the link a day or two before the meeting. If you click on that link when the meeting starts (or up to 30 minutes before the meeting) on any computer, laptop, smartphone or tablet, you'll automatically be an attendee. If your computer has a video camera, microphone and speakers, you'll be able to see all the other attendees and participate in the virtual meeting. So, join us, if you can. Hope to see you at the meeting.</p>
<p>Wake Chapter Live Event Saturday Apr 30th 1 p.m.</p>	<p>Join Us for an Afternoon at the North Carolina Museum of Art (NCMA). This will be our first in-person social event since the pandemic. We plan to meet at the North Carolina Museum of Art for the special exhibit titled "Fault Lines: Art and the Environment." Part of the event is indoors; part is outdoors, and if you let Janet McGettrick know, she will attempt to schedule restaurant seating for us outdoors. If you're interested in attending, please see the details of our planned event HERE. Note that you'll need to buy your tickets early; they are selling fast.</p>

HLAA 2022 National Convention

The HLAA 2022 Convention is June 23-25 in Tampa, Florida! HLAA is very excited to be hosting an in-person Convention again. This year the exhibit hall, workshops, demo presentations, plenary sessions, social events and Research Symposium will all be held under one roof at the brand new JW Marriott Tampa Water Street.. Start planning your trip now!



Convention registration is now open. Visit the Convention page (hearingloss.org/programs-events/convention) for more information. Be sure to register by March 4 to receive early-bird rates!

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HLAA Wake Chapter Event at the NCMA

On Saturday, April 30, the Wake Chapter will offer its first social event since the 2020 arrival of the COVID-19 virus.

Chapter members (the fact that you're reading this newsletter makes you a chapter member!) along with their spouse or another friend are invited to join us to experience the [North Carolina Museum of Art](#) special exhibit titled "[Fault Lines: Art and the Environment](#)."



The exhibit incorporates indoor and outdoor elements involving video, photography, sculpture and mixed-media works.

[Purchase tickets online](#) for the 1 p.m. section. The chapter will reserve outdoor seating for those interested in buying lunch at the museum café prior to the exhibition time. Participants will gather as a group to view the outdoor portion of the exhibit and then proceed through the indoor exhibit at their own pace. A ticket, which includes access to both portions of the exhibit, costs \$23.60. Special prices are offered for seniors (65 and older), military, college students, youth and museum members.

Tickets are limited, so purchase them as soon as you can (no later than February 20) and then send an email to Janet McGettrick (jmcgettrick106@gmail.com). For planning purposes, she needs to know how many tickets you've purchased and whether you plan to eat lunch at the museum prior to our exhibition time.

In April we will share additional details and provide information on any COVID 19 safety precautions in place at the museum.

Don't miss this opportunity to meet or reconnect with chapter friends!

If You Missed the November Wake Meeting

Assistive technology services available through the NCATP were a topic of the HLAA Wake Chapter virtual meeting in November 2021. Brittany Hawley MS, OTR/L, an Assistive Technology Specialist with the [North Carolina Assistive Technology Program](#) (NCATP) gave a presentation covering their services. The [slide presentation](#) is available online.

Through its regional centers across the state and online, the program provides numerous services, including demonstrations of assistive technology devices.

Thursdays at 11:30 a.m., NCATP offers "[Accessibility for All](#)" presentations about assistive technology devices via Zoom. During these 30-minute sessions NCATP experts demonstrate new assistive technology devices or tools and share tips on how they can help users stay active, engaged and connected. Recordings of the presentations are available on [YouTube](#).

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2022 Wake Chapter Scholarship Program

Do you know a Wake County high school senior with hearing loss who plans to go to college?

Let them know about the Hearing Loss Association of America Wake Chapter Scholarship Program.

The program, in its third year, provides \$500 scholarships for one or two college-bound students with hearing loss from Wake County. The application deadline is March 31.

Applicants must reside in Wake County and be seeking acceptance at an accredited university, college or community college. They also must have a moderate hearing loss or more and wear a hearing aid or cochlear implant. Financial need is not a consideration. The \$500 scholarship is a one-time award and will be sent to the recipient when s/he begins classes.

Refer a potential applicant to the [HLAA Wake Chapter Web Site](http://www.nchearingloss.org/wake.htm) at www.nchearingloss.org/wake.htm and to these two forms:

- [Scholarship Application Form](#)
- [Scholarship Reference Letter Form](#)

The scholarship program is made possible by the generous support of participants in the North Carolina Walk4Hearing, a hearing health awareness and fundraising event conducted by the Hearing Loss Association of America.

2021 Scholarship Recipients Thriving in College

The second “class” of Wake Chapter college scholarship recipients is flourishing. Our 2021 recipients – Ani Khachadourian of Cary (Panther Creek High School), Parker Shoun of Raleigh (Millbrook High School) and Rhyne Thornton of Fuquay-Varina (Southern Wake Academy) – are adjusting well to the rigors of college life.



Ani Khachadourian

Ani, who uses one hearing aid and one cochlear implant, says her first semester at Lafayette College in Easton, PA went “pretty well.” Throughout her school career, Ani has used FM systems to keep pace in the classroom.

“Considering mask updates, my FM system worked well for me, hearing-wise,” she says. “Since the school I go to is a smaller school, my hearing experience is very similar to high school! I still struggle to hear since everyone wears a mask all the time, but it’s our new ‘normal.’”

Lafayette recruited Ani for its soccer team, but she was unable to play this past fall due to a foot injury. Academically, she is currently leaning toward a career in engineering.

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Scholarship Recipients Thriving in College (continued)



Parker Shoun

Parker was born with bilateral hearing loss and uses two cochlear implants. He completed his first semester at Barton College in Wilson, NC with a 3.54 grade-point average.

“Everything in the first semester went great,” he says. Parker is clearly enjoying the independence of college life, citing it as a significant difference from high school.

Parker is a member of the Barton lacrosse team, which will soon open its season. “I think I will get a little playing time,” he says, “but I’m not in the starting lineup.”



Rhyne Thornton

Rhyne, who attends Catawba College in Salisbury, NC, has benefitted from using two hearing aids for many years. He is majoring in digital media production and made the dean’s list with “A’s” in all his first semester classes.

Outside the classroom, Rhyne is gaining practical experience in his area of career interest. He is involved in online streaming of Catawba soccer, volleyball and basketball contests.

“I usually have one other person helping out,” he says. “We alternate between working the camera and working the on-screen scoreboard and ads.”

We are now accepting applications for 2022 Wake Chapter college scholarships. Learn more [HERE](#).

AARP Article about Cochlear Implants

If you, or someone you know, is or should be considering a cochlear implant (CI), there’s an interesting [article about CIs](#) in the latest AARP Monthly newsletter. That link to the article is included here, because it’s nice to see broadly available information introducing people to CIs and how they can provide hearing for many people, even if they’re “beyond hearing aids.”

If you want more information about CIs, there’s a really good Facebook group called [CI Experiences](#), where over 36,000 people worldwide ask questions and share experiences. Most of the members have a CI (or two). Some members are just thinking about getting a CI, and some are hearing loss professionals. The group is well managed, and moderators keep it well focused. It’s free to join, and you have a choice of receiving posts as emails or just going to the group’s page and searching for your interests.

Hearing Loss Humor

Pickles is a wonderful cartoon strip that focuses on an elderly couple in everyday situations. As you might expect, some of their strips cover hearing loss.

Due to copyright law, we can’t include an actual “Pickles” cartoon strip in the newsletter without permission, but this [link](#) will take you to a one of “Pickles” dealing with hearing loss. If you like **Pickles**, and use Facebook, there is a [Facebook group](#) called **Pickles My Life** you can join that shares favorites.

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Focus on Wake People: Deborah Stroud

I'm a late deafened adult and I spent all my career life in Corporate America and always was blessed to live in the hearing world until I was in my mid-30's. I started noticing I wasn't able to hear as well on the phone with my left ear. Time went on and the hearing loss slowly progressed. It took me some years of not wanting to admit to myself or anyone else that I had a hearing loss. "Fake it until you make it" was my motto then and in the many years to come. Unfortunately, the time came when I finally had to admit that I needed help and went to get my hearing tested. I had no idea that it was as bad as it was. I was diagnosed with a sensorineural otosclerosis hearing loss. It was so gradual over those years that my brain just adapted to it and I was too vain and embarrassed during that time I guess to even think about wearing a hearing aid. I was totally in "denial"!



My ENT encouraged me to go to a meeting with the Wake Chapter of the North Carolina Hearing Loss Association of America. It took me a few years to make that step as I thought I was too young to have hearing loss and there would only be "old-er" people at the meetings. Now, I am one of the "old-er" people at our meetings and I have learned that hearing loss has no age limit. (SMILE) The first night I walked into one of the meetings, I learned so much from the speaker and the people there were so warm and inviting. I left there feeling like a weight was lifted off of me. Everyone at the meeting was "just like me." They all had various levels of hearing loss and stories of their own and I knew they "understood". I have such a wonderful family and many friends who supported me the best way they knew how to but none of them had hearing loss, so I couldn't really expect them to understand. The people at that meeting did. I have learned so much over the years from the people in our local and state chapters. I never get tired of going to the meetings and learning new things about hearing loss and the many advances in the technology and listening to the stories of others and being able to "give back" in some small way. I wanted to become more actively involved in the group, so I became a board member of the Wake Chapter of HLAA and also joined the NC HLAA Association and am serving as treasurer for the state association. It's really been an honor and a privilege to serve on these boards over the years.

Finally, in 2004 my left ear had been totally deaf for a number of years and at this point I had been wearing a hearing aid in the right one for some years. The hearing in my right ear dropped quite significantly several times that year after sinus infections...down from 65% to only 38% left. My ENT came in the room that day after my hearing test and told me what the changes were and I felt so sick to my stomach. He then talked to me about considering a cochlear implant.

I knew if things kept progressing, it would only be a short time before I might be totally deaf and I was scared to death. How would I function? What about my job and communicating with my family and friends? I knew nothing about a cochlear implant and only knew one person that had one so I began trying to find out all I could about getting the implant. I researched the companies that made the cochlear implant products. I also joined some email forums for people with hearing loss and cochlear implants and talked to anyone I could that would tell me about their experience.

My surgery was scheduled for May 24, 2005 and when they gave me the date, I just cried because it was my Dad's birthday. He had passed away 10 years before. What a special gift for me on his special day!! I just knew then that all was going to be okay. I chose an Advanced Bionics implant for the left ear that had been totally deaf for over 10 years. I didn't want to give up the very small amount of hearing that remained in the right side, so I figured ... what did I have to lose? It was my "hope" and that excited me that there may be a chance to hear something again on that side instead of just silence. [Continued on Next Page](#)

Focus on Wake People: Deborah Stroud (Continued)

My implant activation was scheduled for June 16, three weeks after my surgery. Boy, was I ready to get the process started!!! I had NO clue as to what was going to happen, especially since I had decided to implant the ear that was totally deaf for so long. I was told that because it had been deaf for so long that I might only hear environmental sounds and not much speech. I didn't care ... I was ready to try. The ear was already deaf and of no benefit anyway. I was ready to work hard and do whatever it took to make it work for me, no matter how long it took. I had been told to just know that each day would get better and better as this old brain started relearning the new sounds with the implant. When my audiologist turned the implant on, at first, it sounded like beeps and then just odd sounds when she would say something, then in just a matter of minutes, I heard her saying the months of the year, the days of the week and "the boy ran up the hill." I started laughing and crying and when I heard myself laughing, I just laughed some more. It sounded soooooo funny!!! Yes, it was very different but I didn't care. My audiologist just sat there with her mouth open in surprise that I was able to understand what she was saying!!! TOOOO COOOOL!!! I decided to make this experience fun and to look at it as an "adventure" and each and every day, more and more things that I hadn't heard in so long started coming in and I was just in awe. Who says you can't teach an old dog new tricks, huh!!! I just couldn't wait to get up each morning and see what new sounds would be coming in. It was very exciting!

In 2008, I had the right side implanted. Hearing in "surround sound" again was such a blessing too. The days, months and years after that have been totally amazing.

I would never have believed that losing my hearing would have brought me so many friends, so many opportunities, and so many amazing moments and all of the blessings that it has. Before I lost my hearing, I loved to go dancing and as the hearing loss became profound, I was no longer comfortable in being in music environments as it sounded awful. With the incredible changes and advances in the technology, music and dancing became part of my life again. I was able to start taking dance lessons again, go to movies, enjoy concerts and I even went to a symphony. I had never been to one of those before and was pretty apprehensive about how it was going to be. The evening blew me away! I was able to hear the different instruments and the music was so beautiful. No, it was not all perfect, but I'm just so grateful to experience things like that again.

Since my first cochlear implant, I have been invited to come out to the Advanced Bionics headquarters in Valencia, CA numerous times to help with their research and testing for new products and applications. I saw how the implant is produced from the very beginning to the final product and was so amazed at how many people play a part in this amazing technology and what it takes to make even one implant/processor. It's been such an honor and privilege to be a part of the future technology that will help so many people in the days and years to come. Never in my wildest dreams would I have ever thought I would be able to do something like that. I was asked by our NC Advanced Bionics rep some years back if I would like to be a mentor to others who are going through the hearing loss journey and thinking about getting an implant. What a blessing that has been for me too. I have met so many people and made such wonderful friends through doing this. It's been so nice to share their journeys and also to be able to answer their questions and to cheer them on as they were going through the process.

I was able to help organize the first North Carolina Walk4Hearing in 2009 along with others in our hearing loss group. The NC Walk4Hearing has grown so much over the years and more and more families come each year to the Walk to show their support and to help raise awareness about hearing loss and the effects it has on so many. I hope that is something that you will want to experience with us too in the fall of 2022.

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Focus on Wake People: Deborah Stroud (Continued)

Today, I am so blessed to be working for BEGINNINGS for Parents of Children Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. BEGINNINGS is a non-profit organization serving families from birth until age 22 throughout North Carolina that have children who have been diagnosed with hearing loss. I started out volunteering for this organization 10 years ago as I wanted to be able to “give back” in some way to others affected by hearing loss and was so inspired by all they do and the passion they show to these families that when they offered me a position there, I was so excited! It has truly been another wonderful part of my journey. If you want to check out this amazing organization to learn about what we do, you can go to www.ncbegin.org.

When I started really going through my scariest time with my hearing loss years ago, one of my new friends at the Wake Chapter meetings told me “not to worry ... that in this age of technology, I would never have to live in a world without hearing.” Those words gave me HOPE to hold onto and she was SO right. I took that HOPE and ran with it, and I thank God every single day for the miracle of hearing again and being able to walk this journey with so many amazing people and savor the experiences that we have shared.

Focus on Wake People: Share Your Story?

For the last several newsletters, we’ve included personal stories about HLAA Wake board members and their hearing loss. These stories are inspirational and give readers information about how others are successfully dealing with hearing loss and its challenges. We have a few more months of stories from board members that will be included in future newsletters. Later this year, after we’ve finished the board member stories, other Wake Chapter members (if you receive this newsletter, you’re a “member”), are encouraged to submit your stories about your hearing loss and how you’re dealing with it.

If you are thinking about submitting your story for a future Wake Chapter newsletter, start drafting it now. When you’re ready, submit it to the Wake Newsletter Editor, [Steve Barber](#), via email as a text or Word document plus a photo. Your story can be a paragraph or two ... or a couple of pages ... it’s up to you.

Tech Focus: Bluetooth Today

Many of our members already have some form of Bluetooth supporting their hearing aids (HA) or cochlear implants (CI). But there’s a lot of confusion, because Bluetooth standards have been evolving and are continuing to improve as you read this. Our next Wake Chapter virtual meeting in February will focus on what’s coming as Bluetooth technology improves as it relates to hearing loss, but in this Tech Focus, we’ll cover the past and current state, and try to clear up some of the confusion.



Bluetooth is a digital technology that was originally meant for wirelessly connecting computers and peripherals like mice and printers. It has a relatively short range and it only connects a source with a single paired user. It originally only transmitted from a source to a receiver (it can’t broadcast to multiple users), and the receiver couldn’t communicate with to the transmitter. Still, HA and CI manufacturers saw the potential for streaming audio to HAs and CIs and many hearing devices have some form of Bluetooth that allows audio streaming. But not all use the same versions of Bluetooth.

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Tech Focus: Bluetooth Today (continued)

Today, there are two versions of Bluetooth (Classic and Low Energy) found in various hearing device brands. Both versions are continuing to change, but the Bluetooth Special Interest Group (SIG) has some interesting plans for the future of Bluetooth Low Energy.

Bluetooth Classic can stream to two compatible hearing devices, but originally it required more energy than the small batteries in HAs and CIs could handle, so earlier HAs that used Bluetooth Classic couldn't transmit directly to our hearing devices. They had to use an intermediary device (usually a Bluetooth receiver on a neck loop) that incorporated a larger battery. These early Bluetooth Classic implementations also had another problem: latency. The time to convert the analog audio to digital in the transmitter and back to audio in the receiver took too long, so any audio sent by these early devices worked fine as long as you couldn't see the person speaking on a video or from a remote microphone. What you heard was delayed by 40 milliseconds or more, so you heard the sound noticeably later, so speechreading was very disorienting. Later versions of Bluetooth Classic have somewhat overcome these limitations using compression algorithms called CODECs, which speed the transmission of digital information. This allows some HAs and CIs to stream directly from any Bluetooth Classic source, not just smartphones. Some can communicate in both directions so they can use your hearing device's microphones, and you don't have to speak into your phone (though it needs to be within range).

Some hearing device manufacturers, working with Apple, pursued the emerging Bluetooth Low Energy and were the first to successfully transmit audio directly to HAs and CIs. Bluetooth Low Energy, as the name implies, uses less energy, but was also faster, eliminating the latency problem. Originally, it was named "Made for iPhone" or MFi, and it allowed Apple smart phones and tablets to stream audio directly to compatible HAs and CIs. Now several Android phones with the latest operating system also support this level of Bluetooth Low Energy.

HAs and CIs that use Bluetooth Low Energy can also stream from proprietary TV streamers and remote microphones, but must use a phone clip (or a patch cord) to stream from Bluetooth Classic sources. HAs and CIs using Bluetooth Classic can stream from any Bluetooth Classic source without an adaptor. Some sources computers, remote microphones, TVs and desk phones have Bluetooth Classic built in; others need an adaptor.

Don't miss the next HLAA Wake Chapter virtual meeting. We'll discuss the future of Bluetooth Low Energy. This rapidly changing technology has the potential to make streaming universal, and non-proprietary. You'll want to understand what to look for when you're upgrading your hearing technology. The future is exciting.

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