



Wake Chapter Newsletter May 2025

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Summer Social Returning to Raulston Arboretum

All HLAA Wake Chapter members are invited to a summer social on Sunday, July 20, at the JC Raulston Arboretum in Raleigh. This beautiful location proved popular for our 2024 summer social.

We've reserved Room 109 in the arboretum's air-conditioned education center, and the chapter will provide a light lunch from 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. You are welcome to bring family and friends. It's a chance to meet and socialize with others while enjoying a sandwich, salad, chips, desserts and a beverage.

Please RSVP to Steve Latus (slatus@comcast.net) by July 13.

Participants will have the option of checking out the arboretum's splendid gardens before or after the lunch.

Arboretum admission and parking are free. The arboretum is in west Raleigh near the N.C. State Fairgrounds. The address is 4415 Beryl Road. At this time, Beryl Road is partially closed due to construction. If the road is still closed as the date of the social approaches, we will send all registrants a map providing [detour directions](#).

The mission of the arboretum "is to diversify the landscape by sharing our passion, our plants and our knowledge to plan – and plant for a better world." The arboretum collects, evaluates and selects for introduction landscape plants for their most beneficial economic, ecological and aesthetic value. Its gardens are a living laboratory that reside in and complement the curricula of North Carolina State University.



Raulston Arboretum was a pleasant setting – both inside and out – for our 2024 summer social.

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Present, Future of AI Pondered at Chapter Meeting

There are numerous ways in which artificial intelligence (AI) already is assisting people with hearing loss, but we must be wary of what we're being told and how we use this tool.

Those were key messages delivered to participants in the Hearing Loss Association of America Wake Chapter meeting held on April 24 in the Fellowship Hall at Kirk of Kildaire Presbyterian Church in Cary and via Zoom.

AI is defined as the theory and development of computer systems able to perform tasks that normally require human intelligence, such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making and translation between languages.

Chapter member Steve Barber spoke about the hype and potential benefits of AI in improving speech clarity and noise cancellation in hearing aids and cochlear implants. He noted that device manufacturers are making claims about their use of AI that are, at best, premature. He is optimistic, however, about the potential of AI to bring significant performance improvements in future hearing aids and cochlear implants.

Chapter member Steve Latus demonstrated how to use AI chatbots to answer questions about hearing loss-related topics. An AI chatbot is a computer program that uses AI to simulate human conversation. A chatbot can learn from user input and provide personalized responses to user questions. ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, Google Gemini and DeepSeek are examples of popular chatbots.

Latus posed a "live" question to ChatGPT about the use of AI in cochlear implants, and the response was decidedly unhelpful, consisting primarily of marketing materials from manufacturers rather than more objective information.

According to Latus, chatbots are more effective when asked to provide sources of credible information rather than asked to be an expert source unto themselves. Rather than asking a chatbot, "What is the best OTC hearing aid?" it's better to ask, "What sources would you go to for credible information about OTC hearing aids?" Not surprisingly, when Latus asked ChatGPT the second question, HLAA was one of several sources cited.

Google, the dominant search engine on the internet, is responding to the chatbot challenge with "AI Overviews" for some search results. These overviews summarize key points from top sources determined by Google. Latus finds that the overviews meet most of his basic search needs and save time. He says he still will consider using a chatbot when he has specific details to incorporate in a search request.



Here's how you sign up for free or subscription versions of ChatGPT:

1. GoTo <https://chat.openai.com/chat> and click sign-up
2. Enter your email address, or use one of the quick sign-on options with Google, Microsoft or Apple
3. Create your account (if using email)
4. Enter your email address, create password, tick "Terms of Use" and "Privacy Policy" boxes
5. Click "Continue"

Request a copy of the meeting slides with an email to Steve Latus at slatus@comcast.net.

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HLAA Launches “Beyond Your Ears” Campaign

The Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) has launched the “[Beyond Your Ears](#)” campaign in conjunction with Better Hearing Month and Mental Health Awareness Month, which are both observed in May.

Throughout the month, HLAA is raising awareness and addressing the wider impact of hearing loss in the lives of millions of people.

Even a mild hearing loss can significantly affect daily life, employment, social connections and emotional well-being, often leading to isolation, anxiety, depression, loss of confidence and more. Yet, many people don’t get treated. This educational campaign stresses the need for treatment and support to thrive with hearing loss.



Facts and Figures on Hearing Loss in North Carolina

Each year, the governor of the state of North Carolina proclaims May as “Hearing Loss Awareness Month.”

The proclamation, issued this year by first-year governor Josh Stein, is always an authoritative source of statewide hearing loss facts and figures. This year’s proclamation includes the following:

- Approximately 1.3 million North Carolinians have hearing loss. That’s about 12 percent of the state’s 11 million people.
- Hearing loss impacts 30 percent of adults ages 65-74 and 50 percent of adults 75 and older.
- North Carolina is home to nearly 800,000 veterans, among whom hearing loss and tinnitus are the most common service-related disabilities.
- About 5,900 children in North Carolina have a significant hearing loss, including about 200 children who are diagnosed with hearing loss shortly after birth each year.

[Click here](#) to view the full proclamation.



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Tech Focus: Where Does WiFi Assisted Listening Fit in the Future

Most of us are familiar with several assisted listening technologies including loops and telecoils, FM, infrared (IR), and original Bluetooth and the emerging Auracast Bluetooth. But did you know there's yet another assistive listening option that's being used in a few venues using WiFi for audio transmission?

WiFi is a transmission technology widely used for streaming video and audio via a router to TVs, computers, smartphones and tablets in people's houses. It's a completely different protocol from other audio transmission technologies, but it can also be used for assistive listening.

There are several companies selling WiFi-based assistive listening systems. They include Listen Everywhere, Sennheiser Mobile Connect, Williams AV WaveCAST, and AudioFetch. These companies target facilities (such as churches, senior living facilities, theaters, courtrooms, gyms, bars and tour centers). Some of these systems can be used with existing routers, but some require more capable routers. Different products may support different numbers of servers, and numbers of channels. Hearing aid and cochlear implant compatibility is normally via Bluetooth from personally owned smartphones, but some products offer loanable receivers that use headphones, ear-level speakers or (for telecoil users) neckloops as user interfaces.

A free app on your smartphone is typically used to select which WiFi-based system you want to connect to.

Pricing depends on several factors such as the quality and number of the WiFi routers, whether and how many receivers and user interfaces (headphones, neckloops, etc.) are provided ... or whether users are expected to use their Bluetooth smartphones to stream to their hearing devices.

But how do WiFi-based assistive listening systems stack up against other assistive listening systems?

| | Loops/Telecoils | FM and IR | Auracast | WiFi-Based |
|-----------------------|---|---|--|---|
| Range | Limited by Loop Size ... varies from single person to stadium size | Typically, suitable for up to theater size | Up to 90 ft but larger with multiple transmitters | Up to 150 ft, but larger with multiple routers |
| Latency | Less than 10 ms | Less than 5 ms | 20-50 ms | 40-200+ ms |
| Convenience | Only a telecoil is required in your hearing device or accessory | Usually, a loaned receiver and a user interface (headphones or neckloop/telecoil) | Direct streaming to your compatible hearing device | Your Bluetooth smartphone or a loaned receiver and user interface is required |
| Estimated price range | A few hundreds to tens of thousands of dollars | One thousand to a few thousands of dollars | One thousand to a few thousands of dollars | One thousand to a few thousands of dollars |

There are some WiFi systems installed in central North Carolina, including selected Duke University, and at least two nearby senior living facilities (Glenaire in Cary and Cardinal at North Hills), which have installed the Listen WiFi system.

Auracast isn't yet widely available, but it has several advantages, and some TV, computer and hearing device manufacturers are committed to marketing Auracast compatible models. WiFi systems' potential for longer latency times is a disadvantage that may be addressed with upcoming WiFi updates.

All types of systems will continue to work and may only be abandoned for newer technology if it makes sense financially or because of customer demand. That's why you need to understand these options, whether you're looking for accessible public venues to visit or deciding which hearing aids, CIs, headphones, earbuds, TVs, computers or speakers to buy. Support people at installed venues cannot be counted on to understand how their systems work or explain the problems. That's your job, if you expect to be successful using different assistive listening systems.

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HLAA 2025 Convention

Register now for the [HLAA 2025 Convention](#), which will take place June 11-14 in Indianapolis.

Connect with hundreds of people in our nationwide community of support, including hearing health experts, industry leaders, researchers and individuals with hearing loss from across the U.S. Discover the latest technology, explore new strategies to help you thrive with hearing loss and learn from dozens of workshops on emotional health, parenting with hearing loss, library accessibility, advocacy updates and other topics.



The JW Marriott is offering a special rate of \$199 single or double occupancy plus tax. A special booking link will be provided upon convention registration.

Assistance for Public Meeting Participation

The Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DSDHH) within the NC Department of Health and Human Services has created a guide for citizens to share with municipalities and local governments when requesting accommodations to participate in meetings, programs and services.

The [document](#) provides a list of resources for municipalities and local governments that provides guidance for making appropriate accommodations to residents with hearing loss.

Topics addressed by the guide include:

- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements
- Sign language interpreting services
- Directory of sign language interpreters/transliterators
- Communication access real-time translation (CART) captioning
- Telephone relay services and guidance for talking on a phone with a caller who is hard of hearing
- Services provided by DSDHH Regional Centers

Invitation to Relay NC Spring Fest Saturday May 17th

Sorry for the last-minute notice, but if you would like to attend the Relay NC Spring Fest. Click [HERE](#) for more information and a flyer. Because it's late, you should still RSVP despite the RSVP deadline, and you might want to confirm with bola.desalu@t-mobile.com or kim.m.calabretta@t-mobile.com that your attendance is still possible.

About 100 people have signed up to enjoy the free lunch, caricature drawings, fun photo booth and slide/video show. So, it should be fun.

Relay NC provides Free telecommunication service that enables people who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or DeafBlind to place and receive phone calls. Everyone deserves to communicate by phone.

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Member Outreach

Open; seeking volunteer for this vital role

If interested, please email [Steve Latus](#)

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