



Wake Chapter Newsletter Feb 2025

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[Stigma and Hearing Loss](#)

Countless people who could benefit from hearing screenings or hearing aids do not take advantage of them, and stigma is often listed as a reason why.

Stigma, therefore, is a significant healthcare issue, and it will be the topic for the HLAA Wake Chapter hybrid meeting on Thursday, February 27.

Our speaker will be Jessica West, Ph.D., M.P.H., a medical sociologist who is currently a faculty member in the Duke University School of Medicine in the Department of Head and Neck Surgery and Communication Sciences.

"I am particularly interested in the stigma associated with hearing loss and hearing devices and how to reduce it," says Jessie. "My interest in this research is personal – I have a congenital, bilateral, moderately severe, sensorineural hearing loss and have been wearing hearing aids since the age of 17."



During her presentation, Jessie will help us understand what is meant by "stigma" and describe some common – and not-so-common – stigmas associated with hearing loss and hearing devices. She will also discuss her research and a grant proposal she is developing.

The meeting will take place at Kirk of Kildaire Presbyterian Church in Cary and begin at 7 p.m. It will also be available remotely via Zoom. The Zoom link will be distributed in an email a few days prior to the meeting. For participants in the church's Fellowship Hall, beverages and snacks will be available during and after the presentation. The hall is equipped with a hearing loop, which will provide telecoil-equipped hearing aid or cochlear implant users with an enhanced listening experience. Captions will be provided for both the in-person and Zoom audiences.

More Meetings and Events

Tinnitus Management Subject of Zoom Meeting

The Acoustic Neuroma Association Eastern NC Support Group is offering a Zoom program meeting on Tuesday, March 4, that will include a discussion of tinnitus management.

The program, titled Overview of Tinnitus, Hyperacusis, and Management Options to Help Patients Succeeds, begins at 5 p.m. and **registration is required**.

Presenters will be:

- Andrea Bailey, MA, CCC-A. Clinical Associate
Director, Audiology Services, Department of Head and Neck Surgery & Communication Sciences, Duke University Medical Center
- Hannah Heet, AuD, Audiologist, Duke Otolaryngology of Raleigh
- Grace Bailey, LCMHCA, NCC Mental Health Counselor, Your Journey Through, Raleigh

Andrea Bailey and Hannah Heet work together at Duke Otolaryngology of Raleigh. Grace Bailey is a licensed Mental Health Counselor who works with tinnitus patients incorporating Cognitive Behavioral Therapy or Dialectical Behavior Therapy as part of a tinnitus management program.

For questions or more information, contact Support Group Leaders Stew Binder (marylandterp.888@gmail.com) or Lisa Fisher (lfisher@rubollc.com).

Indianapolis Hosting HLAA 2025 Convention

Start your engine and get revved up to attend HLAA's 40th annual convention, June 11-14, 2025, in Indianapolis, IN – host of the famous Indy 500 automobile race.



The convention brings together hundreds of people with hearing loss from around the U.S. and beyond to learn, discover and connect. Check out the latest technology and hear from health and industry experts during a series of empowering events designed to help you live your best life with hearing loss.

Online registration is now available, with “early bird” rates through March 14. For more convention details, visit:

<https://www.hearingloss.org/get.../hlaa-2025-convention>

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Lunch Social Draws Good, Enthusiastic Crowd

Thanks to all who organized and participated in the Wake Chapter lunch social on Saturday, February 1, at Kirk of Kildaire Presbyterian Church in Cary. The event, rescheduled from its original January 11 date due to poor weather, attracted about 35 people, including several “first-timers.”

Following lunch and a brief chapter update, attendees shared favorite tips for dealing with challenging hearing loss-related situations. We will share some of those tips in a future newsletter.



(Photos courtesy of Ghassan Shahrour)

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[Applications Available for 2025 Scholarship Program](#)

The 2025 Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) Wake Chapter scholarship are available from the HLAA Wake Chapter website at these links: [Application](#) and [Reference Letter](#). Applications will be accepted through March, and recipients will be announced in May.

Applicants must reside in Wake County and be seeking acceptance at an accredited university, college, community college or trade school. 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 award will be sent to the recipient when s/he begins classes.

Since the program began in 2020, the award has been \$500. For 2025, the chapter has increased the award to \$750. The increase was made possible by generous donor support of the Wake Chapter team in the North Carolina Walk4Hearing, a hearing health awareness and fundraising event held annually in October. The chapter has awarded scholarships to two to four applicants annually.

Catching Up with 2024 Scholarship Recipients

Members of our most recent “class” of Wake Chapter scholarship recipients have completed their first college semesters. Below are brief updates from our 2024 recipients, Ian Fan of Raleigh (Cary Academy) and Shannon Williams of Cary (Green Hope High School).

Ian Fan



Ian says his first semester at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill was “definitely filled with challenges.” He says he embraced those challenges and worked through them. A bilateral cochlear implant user since the age of two, Ian sits at the front of auditoriums and classrooms. “Also, I use close captioning services to help me with my learning. Outside the classroom, I try my best to manage my time well and put myself out there to meet new people.”

Shannon Williams



“My first semester at UNCG (University of North Carolina at Greensboro) has been an incredible experience,” says Shannon, who has been deaf in her left ear since birth and has used a hearing aid in her right ear since 2020. “I’ve really enjoyed the challenge of college life and the opportunities to grow both academically and personally.” During the semester she was accepted into UNCG’s school of music as a choral music education major. “This is a huge step for me, and I’m incredibly excited about my path ahead.” Shannon says that she is adapting well to college. “I feel like I’m finding a good balance between my academic responsibilities and making sure I’m staying connected with my peers.”

We are now accepting applications for 2025 Wake Chapter college scholarships. See the article above to learn more.

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Chorale Welcomes Deaf and Hard of Hearing People

The North Carolina Master Chorale, dedicated to delivering the best in choral music performance to audiences in Raleigh, Durham and Chapel Hill, welcomes members of the Deaf and hard of hearing community to attend its April 5 performance at Meymandi Concert Hall in Raleigh. The performance begins at 7:30 p.m.

The program, titled "Tales of Enchantment," will be signed and audio will be available via assisted listening devices. Meymandi has 20 assisted listening devices consisting of an FM receiver and wired over-the-ear headphones that a patron can pick up on a first-come, first-served basis at the lobby box office. Patrons with hearing aids or cochlear implants equipped with a T-coil setting can plug a personal neck loop into the receiver (rather than the headphones) and stream the audio directly to their devices.

See the flyer below for more program details.

Meymandi Concert Hall is part of the Martin Marietta Center for the Performing Arts in downtown Raleigh.

The flyer features a dark, atmospheric background image of a forest at night with silhouettes of trees and several deer. The text is centered and uses a mix of serif and script fonts. The title 'Tales of Enchantment' is in a large, elegant script. The date and time are in a bold serif font. The program details are in a smaller serif font. The bottom section includes information about ASL services, ticket prices, and a QR code.

north carolina
MASTER CHORALE

Tales of Enchantment

April 5th, 2025
7:30pm
Meymandi Concert Hall

Bela Bartok's mythic parable Cantata Profana: "The Nine Enchanted Stags" anchors this concert of magical stories told through music and spoken word. Also on the program is Felix Mendelssohn's seldom heard "The First Walpurgis Night" which tells the treacherous tale of a Druid pagan masquerade. We conclude with Alexander Borodin's exotic Polovtsian dances from his opera "Prince Igor." Join the 170-voice Chorale, full symphonic orchestra, soloists, and narrator for this spectacular program.

ASL and assisted listening devices provided

For reserved ASL seating, contact Martin Marietta Center Box Office.

Pre-concert talk held at 6:40pm inside the Concert Hall.

Tickets starting at \$32 and sold through Ticketmaster.
Scan the QR code or visit ncmasterchorale.org



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Tech Focus: Remembering How Far We've Come

Much has changed in our lifetimes to make hearing loss less of a problem.

Before the early part of the 1900s, technology to help with hearing loss was mostly limited to ear horns of various shapes and sizes. These were worthless for anyone with severe or profound losses.

Prior to the 1950s there was not much help available for helping people with hearing loss. Yes, there had been primitive electronic amplifiers, but they were of little help for anyone with more than modest hearing loss.

But the story of modern technology begins with **body-worn hearing aids**, with a wire and an ear plug. These were marvels, but the amplifiers did not provide much help for a typical hearing loss, which requires frequency-specific amplification that does not overwhelm the frequencies you can hear fairly well. One of the breakthroughs, even in the 1950s, was that many aids included a telecoil, so “streaming” was possible (at least for telephone audio). It took more time before loops added other sources that the telecoils could hear.

The first hearing aids that were able to provide help based on your audiogram arrived a little later and were much better. They were small enough that you could wear them on your ear, in your ear, or even in the arms of clunky eyeglasses. **Advances in electronics** made that possible, but the electronics were still analog circuits, and the hearing aid fitter had little to no control of the gain across the frequencies to match your audiogram. There were usually only two physical screws to adjust the device: one could increase the volume, and one could change the “clipping,” which prevented amplification of loud noises above a certain volume from being amplified at all. The electronics in each hearing aid was, for most hearing aids, fixed in terms of the gain curve that would accurately match your needs. Some aids had minimal adjustments to the frequency response curve, but most people had a “ski slope” loss, so most aids addressed that as best they could. If you had a “reverse slope” loss, or a “cookie bite” loss, you were not likely to benefit much from an aid that could not accurately fit your needs. Often the only thing the user could control was volume.

Things started to improve for hearing aids **by the late 1980s. Digital** gradually replaced almost all analog technology; hearing aids became computers. Users had more control over more of their hearing aid features. Now it was possible for some aids to let you have multiple programs, directional microphones, control over treble and bass, and sensitivity, but “streaming” still meant using your telecoil to hear phones, a few installed loops, or FM systems (using a neckloop). Some aids had automated features that adjusted settings to best suit the sound environment. A few aids included a way to shift high frequencies to lower frequencies that helped people who had no usable hearing in high frequencies.

By the mid-1980s, **cochlear implants (CIs)** were approved and became available and made it possible to dramatically improve hearing for people whose losses were beyond the capabilities of hearing aids.

Ubiquitous live and recorded **captions** have also been a welcome technology to help people with hearing loss.

The next revolution in hearing technology started in 2010 when **Bluetooth** became common in almost all hearing devices. That meant you could stream from smartphones, TV transmitters, remote microphones and computers. Bluetooth continues to improve, first with new versions that minimize energy needs, and reduce the latency to levels that made synchronization of audio and visual senses possible.

Technical progress continues. In a couple of years, Auracast-capable versions of Bluetooth may allow broadcast capabilities and will benefit even people without hearing loss. Also, we are seeing the first hearing aids with **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**, which promises improved speech enhancement ... even in noise.

We are living in the best times to have a hearing loss, EVER. Stay tuned; it's likely to continue to get better.

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Improving the Sound of Music for Cochlear Implant Users

People with cochlear implants can improve their ability to appreciate music, but it requires a lot of work and being open to new musical styles and instruments. Here's a [link to an article](#) by Brad Ingrao, AuD. The article covers why music poses significant challenges for cochlear implant users, and what patients and their hearing health professionals can do that might make listening to music more enjoyable. The article was published in *The Hearing Review*.

Important Hearing Loss Tip

Don't wear headphones while vacuuming. It's easy to vacuum the whole house before you realize you forgot to plug in the vacuum.

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Member Outreach

Open; seeking volunteer for this vital role

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