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Upcoming Meetings and Events

Chapter Social

You are invited to an HLAA Wake Chapter social on Saturday, January 13, from noon to 1:30 p.m. at Kirk of Kildaire Presbyterian Church located at [200 High Meadow Dr. Cary, NC](#). Bring friends and family. The chapter will provide a light lunch. No formal program... just a chance to meet and socialize with others while enjoying a sandwich, salad, chips, desserts and a beverage. RSVP to Steve Barber (steve.barber@earthlink.net) by January 6.

Possible Future Program Meetings

- Mental health services for the Deaf and hard of hearing
- How to better enjoy music with hearing loss
- Introduction to Deaf culture and American Sign Language
- What's the connection between hearing loss and dementia?
- Dogs for Better Lives

We'd love to hear your ideas for future HLAA Wake Chapter program meetings. Please send your suggestions to Steve Latus (slatus@comcast.net).

HLAA 2024 Convention

Set aside June 26-29 on your calendar to attend the HLAA 2024 Convention at the Sheraton Grand Resort at Wild Horse Pass. As HLAA's first-ever event at a resort rather than an urban hotel, next year's convention in Phoenix promises to be a brand-new experience! This annual event is the largest of its kind, designed to support hundreds of people with hearing loss from all walks of life around the United States. Start planning your trip to the Valley of the Sun now! Early bird registration will open online sometime in January 2024 at hearingloss.org/convention.



TV Captioning Presentation Engages Chapter Audience

The past, present and future of television captioning from the perspective of a TV insider proved to be an engaging topic for HLAA Wake Chapter members at a November 15 program.

Pete Sockett, Director of Engineering and Operations for Capitol Broadcasting Company, the owner of four North Carolina television stations, including Raleigh-based WRAL, traced the history of captioning from pre-television times all the way to automatic speech recognition (ASR), which uses artificial intelligence (AI) technology to process speech into readable text.

Pete spoke to an audience of about 20 people split almost evenly between in-person attendees at Kirk of Kildaire Presbyterian Church in Cary and remote Zoom call participants.

Title cards used in silent movies of the early 1900s are considered the first form of captions. The first captions in TV programs appeared in the 1970s on *The French Chef* and *ABC Evening News*. The ability to turn captions on and off (“closed captions”) arrived in 1980, but televisions weren’t required to include caption decoders until the 1990s.



Pete Sockett, Director of Engineering and Operations for the company that owns WRAL and three other North Carolina television stations, listens to a question from the audience during his presentation on TV captioning. Also pictured is Wake Chapter member Steve Barber.

Pete said that WRAL began the transition from using human captioners to ASR in the fall of 2021 and converted to near full-time use of ASR captioning for newscasts and local productions by spring 2022. He noted that human captioners are still used for events with loud background audio such as parades and sports and that humans need to “teach” ASR how to process unusual names of people and places.

In the near future, Pete expects ASR to grow more sophisticated, improving its accuracy and reducing the need for human intervention. He envisions a day when ASR will “understand” slang and the context of speech and automatically position captions in a portion of the screen displaying “less important” video. He also believes that it won’t be too long before televisions will be capable of displaying closed American Sign Language in addition to closed captions.

In a lively question-and-answer session, Pete encouraged the audience to contact him when captions on WRAL appear garbled. “We have a responsibility to make sure they are presented to you correctly,” he said. You can see his PowerPoint slides, which include his contact information, [HERE](#).

Unfortunately, due to circumstances beyond the Chapter’s control, we provided the Zoom audience with limited video and audio of the program. We promise that the Zoom experience for our next “hybrid” meeting will be much better.

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2023 Walk4Hearing Season Now Complete

The Hearing Loss Association of America wrapped up the 2023 Walk4Hearing season in Tampa in early November. Over the course of 20 events around the country, the Walk4Hearing community raised \$829,000 with 584 teams and 5,420 participants. HLAA was "thrilled to see a significant increase in the number of teams, showcasing the growing support for our cause."

Pictured here is the North Carolina Walk4Hearing, held in Cary in October, which raised nearly \$46,000, including \$3,300 by the Wake Chapter team.



Announcing the Wake Chapter 2024 Scholarship Program



Parker Shoun, a 2021 recipient of an HLAA Wake Chapter scholarship, participated in the 2023 NC Walk4Hearing. Parker is now a junior at Barton College in Wilson.

The Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) Wake Chapter will again sponsor scholarships for high school seniors with hearing loss.

Application forms for the 2024 Wake Chapter scholarship are available from the [HLAA Wake Chapter website](#). Submissions will be accepted from January through March, and recipients will be announced in May. The chapter has awarded scholarships to 10 students since the program began in 2020.

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 \$500 scholarship is a one-time award and will be sent to the recipient when s/he begins classes.

The HLAA Wake Chapter scholarship program is made possible by the generous support of participants in the North Carolina Walk4Hearing, a hearing health awareness and fundraising event.

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Tech Focus: Cochlear Implant (CI) Activation

Once the CI surgery has been done and your incision has healed for a few days or weeks, you'll have an activation appointment with your audiologist. They'll provide your processor and set it up with the mapping and programs you will use to start your journey to hearing better.

Mapping: During activation of your recently implanted CI, your audiologist will connect your processor to their computer, then put your processor on you. After that, they'll slowly increase the stimulation to each electrode, one at a time, until you can barely hear the sound at each electrode's frequency. That establishes the low end of your "dynamic range" for that electrode. Then they'll slowly increase the volume for that electrode and ask you to tell them when it's as loud as possible, but not uncomfortable. That establishes the high end of the "dynamic range" for that electrode. If you don't stop them at the "uncomfortable level", you may feel a nerve twinge ... and they will back off. After they've done each electrode, they may ask you to tell them which sound is louder, while they separately stimulate two adjacent electrodes at the same volume ... that's just to make sure all electrodes are roughly the same volume for the same amount of stimulation. Once mapped, your CI will only stimulate sounds for each electrode at volumes that are in your "dynamic range" ... no matter how loud the actual sounds your processor hears. Even standing near a jet plane shouldn't be too loud,

Programs: Your audiologist will set up some programs you can use on your processor. Initially, they may be the same program but at gradually increasing volume. You can start with the quietest program and increase to louder programs as your brain gets used to perceiving sounds again. At subsequent visits with your audiologist, the programs will be changed to more practical things like hearing your best in different situations like quiet, noisy, music, or possibly a program that tries to automatically adjust as needed.

Accessories: You may be introduced to accessories, like a remote microphone, a TV streamer, or a phone clip, but unless you already have used such things, they will be covered at subsequent mapping appointments.

Hearing: After mapping, your audiologist will likely turn on your CI, and say a few simple words to see if you understand them without being able to see their face ... something simple and obvious like colors, days of the week, or months of the year. You may or may not understand even those simple words or they may sound distorted. A few lucky patients will easily understand the words and feel that they sound reasonably normal, but most patients will need some time and practice for their brains to relearn how to process all the frequencies they haven't recently understood well or at all. The time for this magic to happen varies ... often with how long it's been that your brain has been deprived of certain frequencies. Patients who have never understood speech typically will need even more time and practice.

Many users first report that speech sounds robotic or perhaps like Alvin and Simon, the chipmunks. That's not unusual, because your brain hasn't heard certain frequencies for a while. Your brain will gradually learn to perceive those frequencies as closer to normal. Some patients initially only hear sounds they describe as "bells and whistles". That's a bit frightening, but once your brain figures out what those sounds are, it will gradually make them understandable.

Rehab: The "rehabilitation" period can be hours, days, weeks or months. You may hear many new sounds you don't recognize, but once you get the answer to "What was that sound?" your brain makes the connection and you won't have to ask, next time. You may be surprised at things that make noise: leaves rustling in the wind, your dog's toenails clicking on the floor or rain on the roof. Your audiologist will suggest ways you can practice that will help your brain perceive sounds more normally. It might be listening to audio books while reading the text, or using various apps designed to help your brain learn different sounds. During the first year after activation, you'll probably have several mappings. After these initial mappings become more stable, you will want to have an occasional mapping every year or two to make any fine-tuning adjustments that might be needed. The first several mappings will likely broaden the dynamic range.

For most people, their CI isn't an instant success. It can be easy and fast for the lucky people, but it's a journey for most people ... a journey that the vast majority of CI users are happy they took. [GO TO Page 1](#)

[Free to a Good Home!](#)

The HLAA Wake Chapter has inherited a new [TV Ears Dual Digital Voice Clarifying TV Listening System](#) and would like to give it away to a chapter member.

This system enables a headset user to set his or her TV volume to a comfortable level that is independent of the TV speakers' volume.

As pictured to the right, the system includes two wireless headsets with rechargeable batteries and a transmitter that connects to a variety of different types of audio output jacks on a TV.

Please note:

- The system is **not** designed for use with hearing aids that prevent insertion of the headset ear tips into a user's ears.
- The transmitter uses infrared rather than Bluetooth technology. Therefore, this system will **not** transmit audio directly from a TV to Bluetooth-enabled hearing devices.

If this system might improve your ability to understand TV audio, please carefully review the product information available from the link above. Upon review, if you still think the system might be beneficial AND it will work with your TV, contact Steve Latus (slatus@comcast.net) to arrange delivery.



[Hearing Loss Holiday Survival Guide](#)

The holiday season can be a mixed blessing for people with hearing loss. While we are excited to share time with family and friends, we may also worry that our hearing loss will prevent us from enjoying all the holiday season has to offer. Large celebrations can be exhausting, as we struggle to communicate in party spaces packed with people and noise.

But there are strategies to help you join in on the fun! So check out this HLAA [Hearing Loss Holiday Survival Guide](#) by Shari Eberts, hearing health advocate and co-author of *Hear and Beyond*.



*Shari Eberts is a passionate hearing health advocate and internationally recognized author and speaker on hearing loss issues. She has served on the HLAA Board since October 2015. She is the founder of **Living with Hearing Loss** and an executive producer of **We Hear You**, an award-winning documentary about the hearing loss experience. By sharing her experience of adult-onset genetic hearing loss, Shari hopes to help others live more peacefully with their own hearing issues. Connect: **Blog, Facebook, LinkedIn, X.***

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[Connect with the Wake Chapter Facebook Group](#)

Wake Chapter has a Facebook page where members can post or share interesting information about hearing loss or about our chapter. It's a great place to stay connected with timely information between newsletters. You can join at [THIS LINK](#). If you're already a member of our Wake Facebook group, that link will take you to the page.



HLAA Wake Chapter

Public group · 68 members

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