



## Wake Chapter Newsletter Apr 2024

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## April Wake Chapter Meeting

**Appreciating Music Despite Hearing Loss** – One of the most common frustrations expressed by hearing aid and cochlear implant users is that “music just doesn’t sound like it used to.” Taylor Sands, MED-EL Senior Consumer Engagement Manager and a speech-language pathologist, will explore this issue and provide advice during our **Thursday, April 25**, hybrid chapter meeting. The meeting will take place at [Kirk of Kildaire Presbyterian Church, 200 High Meadow Dr. in Cary](#), and begin at 7 p.m. It also will 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.



## 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, this 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! registration is open online at [hearingloss.org/convention](https://hearingloss.org/convention).



## Chapter Scholarship Program Applications Under Review

The application period for the 2024 Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) Wake Chapter Scholarship Program ended March 31 and the selection committee is now reviewing the submissions. We will announce one or more recipients before the end of April.

High school seniors with moderate hearing loss or more who reside in Wake County and are seeking acceptance at an accredited university, college, community college or trade school were eligible to apply for the program. The \$500 scholarship is a one-time award.

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

## [Interesting Articles in HLAA's Hearing Life e-News](#)

The March 21<sup>st</sup> issue of HLAA's e-News has many interesting articles. Below are some of the articles of general interest in this issue that you may want to see. To see this issue and read all the articles, [HERE](#), or you can link directly to the following selected articles.



- **HLAA Support Leads to Broader Hearing Aid Coverage in Washington State.** Read the blog [HERE](#).
- **What Hearing Assistive Technology Could You be Missing ...** This is a TED<sup>x</sup> Talk, **Hearing Loss: Beyond Hearing Aids** by Juliette Sterkens, Au.D., who is internationally known as an advocate for more hearing aid telecoil and streaming options. She has presented in-person a few years ago at HLAA Wake Chapter. You can see this Ted<sup>x</sup> Talk [HERE](#), even if you don't go to the e-News articles.
- Barbara Kelley, HLAA Executive Director, in **WorkPlace Accessibility Panel Discussion**. See the recording [HERE](#) (requires a Linked in account).
- **Exploring Self-Employment for People with Hearing Loss**, a free HLAA HEARINGU webinar. Learn more and register [HERE](#).
- 2023 Research Symposium Videos: **"The Joy of Music/Loving Your Ears"**. See the videos, [HERE](#).

If you would like to receive all issues of HLAA's *Hearing Life e-News*, you can subscribe, free, [HERE](#).

## [The Mental Health Crisis Services Needs Assessment](#)

If you were unable to attend the Wake Chapter program in February on a state project to develop mental health crisis services for the hard of hearing and others in North Carolina, you can still contribute to the project.

Meeting attendees were given the opportunity to assist in the development of these services by completing an assessment on their needs in medical settings.

[This Mental Health Crisis Needs Assessment is available online](#) and is for persons who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing/Blind, and Late Deafened throughout the state of North Carolina. If you do not have a hearing loss, please do not fill out this form unless you are assisting an individual with hearing loss.



The assessment is designed to collect data to help the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Use Services ensure that Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing/Blind, and Late Deafened persons seeking mental health crisis services are referred to accessible community-based services, and improve crisis response services for this underserved community.

The deadline for completing the assessment is May 31.

More information on services for the hard of hearing – including crisis solutions – is offered through the [NC Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Use Services](#)

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## Tech Focus: Making Landline Phones Accessible

If you have a hearing loss, land-line phones can be difficult to hear clearly. Many do have a volume control, and that can help, but that's usually not enough if you're a hearing aid or cochlear implant (CI) user. Here are some options you can use to solve those problems. Most hearing aids and CIs have ways to "stream" audio directly into their processors, either via Bluetooth, FM, or telecoil, and getting that to work can make all the difference.

If your hearing aid or cochlear implant has a telecoil that's activated, you can just switch to telecoil mode, and hold the earpiece of almost any phone to your processor. That may work, but streaming from your paired smartphone is usually better. However, if you need to stream your home or work landline phone to your hearing devices, there are a few options.

- 1) If your phone has a headphone jack, you can patch in whatever accessory you have directly to the phone. That accessory might be a neckloop (if your hearing device has a telecoil), or a Bluetooth adaptor that's compatible with your hearing device's Bluetooth. Some hearing devices need a traditional Bluetooth adaptor, and they are widely available. But a few (mainly ReSound, Jabra, and Cochlear) use the Mini Microphone 2+ and other hearing devices (Phonak and similar) use Roger mics.
- 2) If your phone doesn't have a headphone jack but does use a handset wired to the desk phone, you can add a "telephone recorder control" that splits the handset wire to provide a headphone jack. Once you have a headphone jack, you can plug in your favorite accessory. It's easy to connect. Just unplug the handset wire from the phone and insert plug "a" of the telephone adaptor control into the same jack on the phone. Then insert the disconnected end of the handset wire into jack "b" of the telephone adaptor control. Then insert plug "c" of the telephone adaptor control into your streaming accessory. If your streaming accessory has a 3.5 mm plug instead of a jack, you must add a 3.5 mm female/female adaptor that lets you insert your accessory's plug. Telephone recorder controls and female/female adaptors are available on Amazon or from assistive technology dealers.
- 3) Captioned phones (e.g. CapTel and CaptionCall) are desk phones for land-line connections that will caption incoming audio on a screen, and they also have a headphone jack, so they don't need a telephone adaptor control. Unfortunately, they require an analog phone system. They'll work at home, but usually work phone systems are digital. Some companies may install an analog phone line for you at work, so you might be able to use a captioned phone at work.
- 4) You may be able to reroute incoming calls from your home or work landline phone to your smartphone. That could allow clear streaming of the audio to your hearing devices and the additional advantage of captions. Both iPhone and Android phones have built-in caption capabilities, and there are several free or subscription captioning apps that you can add to your smartphone (e.g. Otter, NALscribe, Ava, and others). Some have additional useful captioning features like the ability to save the transcript.



TELEPHONE RECORDER CONTROL



FEMALE/FEMALE ADAPTOR

At work, there are other differences. Many companies now use their computers as phone systems, so you could be given an option to have a desk phone, or simply use your computer as the phone. You might be able to simply patch your streaming accessory directly to the headphone jack that most computers already have. Some of the computer-based phones in work environments can also use a USB port to plug in a headset. Better headsets are telecoil compatible, so if you have telecoils in your hearing devices, you might find that a telecoil compatible headset will work for you.

Whether your phone needs are at home or work, noise is another thing to consider. Better hearing aids and CIs can use a smartphone app for remote control. That gives you much more control over your hearing devices' features. For example, you can turn off their hearing devices' own microphones, so you only hear the streamed audio and not the room noise.

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## [This Newsletter Welcomes Articles by HLAA Members](#)

We're pleased to include the following article provided by Wake Chapter member, Julia Freifeld. Julia is an author and an artist. I think you'll enjoy her article on a child's perspective of disabilities.

But you don't have to be an author, yet ... you can become one. If you have or can write an article (up to four pages) about anything related to hearing loss, please submit it to [steve.barber@earthlink.net](mailto:steve.barber@earthlink.net) for possible inclusion in our HLAA Wake Chapter newsletter.

## [Hearing Loss Through the Eyes of Children](#)

By Julia Freifeld



*The author with her grandchildren, Max, Maya, Ellie, and Noah.*

I began losing my hearing in my 30s. By age 42 I purchased my first pair of hearing aids. I'm 67 years old and have worn cochlear implants since 2019. The challenges of being hard of hearing have taken up over half my life.

About 20 years ago I was asked if my hearing loss makes me feel disabled. I didn't feel disabled then, but sometimes now, I do. My house is often filled with my children and grandchildren. They'll be laughing and talking, yet, I can't make out their words. I've adapted to this scenario: me finding pleasure in seeing their beautiful and happy faces. I call it "child gazing." I could feel disconnected, like I'm missing out, but I don't. I've learned not to. I've learned I have options. I can enjoy life without hearing every word. If a picture is worth a thousand words, well, a view of my loved ones enjoying themselves defines that adage.

If a hearing person spent “A day in the life of Julia,” they would discover it can be like a game of charades! Me trying to pick up the visual cues from the world around me. I watch facial expressions and hand and body movements closely; lip reading is automatic. I quickly find the best place to stand or sit in order to hear with as little interference from background noise as possible.

I have four grandchildren ranging in age from 10 to six years old.

I decided to ask them to define the word disability and describe what it’s like having a grandmother that is hard of hearing. I was curious about a child’s perspective. They were old enough to be aware of people in their life and articulate their opinions.

Noah is my eldest grandson. He is 10 years old. He said a disability is something that makes someone unique. Noah remembered when I wore hearing aids. He had to repeat words and sit close so I could hear him. Since wearing CIs, he said,

“I’m able to talk to you like a regular person. If I didn’t know it, I wouldn’t think you have a hearing disability. And, the mini mic really helped! It makes it easy for you to hear! I can whisper into it from like five or 10 feet away and you’re able to hear! My voice goes straight into your implants. It’s great when we’re in the car and you can’t read my lips. The mini mic is a really smart device.”

Noah remembered visiting me after my cochlear implant surgery. “You had a gigantic bandage. It wasn’t that scary. I was curious, so I touched it. It was a little funny because I wasn’t used to you looking part mummy.”

My last question was if my hearing loss caused him any worries.

Noah answered, “Not really, because of your implants I can communicate with you. I don’t think anything bad is gonna happen.”

Next I spoke with my grandson Max. He’s also 10 years old.

I asked, “Do you know someone with a disability?”

Max: “You.”

Me: “That’s right! Is my hearing loss a problem for the family?”

Max: “Sometimes, someone might have to speak louder. Or, make sure they look at you when they’re talking so you can read lips. Or, if you take your implants off, you speak really loudly.”

Me: “Do you have any questions that you’ve never asked me about my hearing?”

Max: “If I’m not facing you, what do words sound like?”

Me: “I won’t hear distinct words, the words will sound blurry and softer. And, by the way, all voices sound metallic to me. A person’s voice sounds like they’re talking through a tin can. Do you know when an actor uses a microphone to speak? Their voice sounds tinny. That’s another way to describe how voices sound to me! Has there been a time when my hearing loss is funny?”

Max: “Sometimes, yeah. If I say I went to the zoo and saw a monkey, you might think I said something totally different. It’s just really funny!” (laughs).

Next, I spoke with seven year old Ellie.

Me: "What do you notice about my hearing loss?"

Ellie: "Sometimes when I tell you something you can't hear what I'm saying, so I have to speak a little louder or repeat it three times!"

Me: (laughs) not twice but three times?"

Ellie: "Yes, like Bubbie, Bubbie, Bubbie! (laughs!)"

Ellie: "I remember when you had the surgery. Why did you have the bandage over your head?"

Me: "I had surgery. They had to make a cut, open up my skin and place a magnet in there. Then the surgeon thread a skinny little wire called an electrode into my cochlea. There is a magnet on my implant here. That magnet sticks where the other magnet is. I have tiny microphones here."

Ellie: "From here it goes into your ear?"

Me: "My ears don't work. Do you know the interesting part? When you talk to me, your voice goes into the microphone, it travels along the coil, down the electrode and into my brain. I don't hear with my ears anymore, I hear with my brain! That's why it is a disability, because I hear differently than other people."

Last, I interviewed my youngest granddaughter, six year old Maya.

Me: "What does a disability mean?"

Maya: "That something doesn't have power."

Me: "My hearing has lost its power, right?"

Maya: "Yes, It's hard for you to hear. When you're with family, if people aren't looking at you or speaking up, you won't hear."

Me: "Why do I need people to look at me when they're talking?"

Maya: "If they're looking over there, the sound goes that way, but if they're looking towards you, it goes to you. I have to change how high or how low my voice is so you can hear me."

Me: "Do you have any questions that you've never asked me about my hearing?"

Maya: "Did it hurt when you had the implant surgery?"

Me, "I was given a drug called anesthesia, which blocked the pain and made me sleep. So, I didn't feel any pain during the surgery."

Me: "Is there anything different when you sleep over at my house because of my hearing loss?"

Maya: "After we've gone to sleep, If I wake up and need something, I have to ask Jon [my boyfriend] because when you're sleeping you don't hear anything until your implants are on. So, I have to ask Jon."

Me: "Am I the only person you know with hearing loss?"

Maya: "I'm reading a book and the main character wears hearing aids. She is learning how to control it and make sure other people don't pick on her because she has a hearing loss."

Me: "Do you know what lip reading is?"

Maya: “It’s when, if someone is deaf, they can read your lips. So, if I’m saying, ‘I love you,’ you can see what the words are.

I love you Bubbie!”

Having one-on-one conversations with my four grandchildren was a joy and enlightening. They were open and understanding of my limitations as a hard of hearing person. They felt free to ask questions and carefully listened to my answers. We could even laugh at some of the comical aspects of hearing loss.

I didn’t include the entirety of our conversations, but it included discussing other types of disabilities, which they are aware of too.

I witnessed in each child their compassion towards people with disabilities. They accept the idea that people live with obstacles. These understandings will bode well for their future; kindness towards differences and resilience in their own challenges.

*Julia Freifeld is an artist and author. Her book, “In Each Other’s Bones: A Memoir of Love, Loss, and Living” was a #1 best seller on Amazon. Visit her website to learn more: [www.Juliafreifeld.com](http://www.Juliafreifeld.com)*

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