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Upcoming Meetings and Events

Tips for Safer and Less-Stressful Travel

Have you started planning holiday trips? Or have you reached a point in your hearing loss journey where you're NOT planning trips because traveling is such an anxiety-inducing experience?

Either way, join HLAA Wake Chapter on Thursday, September 28, at 7 p.m. for "Tips for Safer and Less-Stressful Travel." This will be the Chapter's first "hybrid" program meeting, meaning you can participate in person or remotely via Zoom.

The meeting will take place at Kirk of Kildaire Presbyterian Church, 200 High Meadow Dr. in Cary. The church's Fellowship Hall is newly equipped with a hearing loop, which will provide telecoil-equipped hearing aid or cochlear implant users with an enhanced listening experience. Interested in participating from home? The Zoom link will be distributed in an email a few days prior to the meeting. Captions will be provided for both the in-person and Zoom audiences.

The program will feature a presentation by Casey Tischner and Lori Hecht-Thomson, two members of the Raleigh-Durham International Airport (RDU) Guest Experience Team. They will discuss how their team assists airport guests, with a special emphasis on how they can help people with hearing loss. They also will describe special services available through the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and explain the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower, a program available at RDU, as well as other airports in North Carolina and across the globe. Following their presentation, Casey and Lori will take questions from the in-person and Zoom audiences.

Our program team also has gathered travel tips covering a variety of situations and modes of transportation. After those are presented, we'll ask audience members to share some of their favorite travel tips. It's sure to be an informative and engaging program!



A MEMBER OF THE RDU GUEST EXPERIENCE TEAM ESCORTS A FAMILY WITH ONE AUTISTIC CHILD THROUGH THE SECURITY CHECKPOINT.

It's Time to Walk4Hearing!

The 2023 NC Walk4Hearing is scheduled for Sunday, October 8th in Cary, NC at the WakeMed Soccer Park. Do plan to join the Wake Chapter team or donate to support any walker ... or just attend. It's always a fun day to show support for hearing loss and meet friends.

Location

WakeMed Soccer Park
201 Soccer Park Drive
Cary, NC

[See Map](#)

Schedule

10:30 a.m. Registration starts
12 p.m. Stage Presentation
12:15 p.m. Walk starts
(5K/3.1 miles)



To join the Wake Chapter team or donate to a walker go to [the Wake Chapter Walk4Hearing Team page](#) and either select the Join Team option or select an existing walker and donate to support them. All donations support [Hearing Loss Association of America](#) and HLAA Wake Chapter.

Spread the message to your family, friends, and your work buddies by sharing the above instructions and link to them and post the information and link on your Facebook page (as public to extend its reach). Let's make this a banner year so we can continue to help our community learn and achieve.

The Walk4Hearing is conducted in 20 cities by HLAA and brings hope to people with hearing loss, meeting them in their communities to raise awareness and show support. Teams of families and friends join with local HLAA Chapters and nonprofit and business partners to raise funds for local programs as well as HLAA nationally.

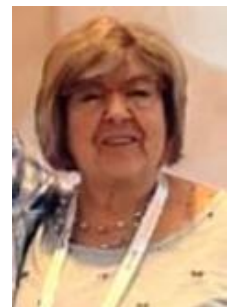
HLAA 2023 National Conference Highlights

A handful of Hearing Loss Association of America Wake Chapter members participated in HLAA's 2023 convention in New Orleans at the end of June. A couple of attendees shared observations on their convention experiences.

Wendy Dembeck Shared a Peek into the Future with Closed Captioning Eyeglasses

What's exciting about the HLAA Convention is that I get to peek into the future. There's so much going on that makes captioning accessible to all of us, but what blew me away were two exhibits of every-day captioning enabled glasses.

I found [TranscribeGlass](#) most exciting. It's a small piece (under 1 oz.) that attaches to your eyeglass frame. It transcribes onto your lens, and you can selectively place the transcription, adjust font size, and make it comfortable. You can even choose the language. A phone app records and saves your transcription. It has a full day's battery life. I signed up as a tester. Have my fingers crossed. That's how excited I am. I did ask if it could be used in a movie theater, but they did not know. Hopefully, I will get a chance to try it out.



There was a second company exhibiting. Exciting as well, but not as far along.

Closed captioning glasses do exist now and have been shown at other conferences. Check them out too. XRAI and Xander are two companies. Pretty fantastic and not too far in the future.

[HLAA 2023 National Conference Highlights \(continued\)](#)

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Steve Latus, Wake Chapter President, Shared His First National Convention Experience

This was my first opportunity to attend the HLAA convention and visit New Orleans. I didn't see much of the city because of the wide range of HLAA activities... and the outside temperatures in the high 90s!



My convention experience began the afternoon before the event's official opening at HLAA Chapter Leader Training. I was able to meet and learn from talented volunteers from across the nation. I was especially intrigued by the efforts of some chapters to assist people who are in the early stages of their hearing loss journeys. While peer support is a basic piece of the HLAA mission, these chapters conduct special small group sessions just for people who are new to hearing loss.

A couple of my favorite education workshops focused on TV captioning. [The Global Alliance of Speech-to-Text Captioning](#) comprises captioners, consumers and advocates determined to improve the quality of TV captions. Amen to that! During its workshop, the alliance invited participants to [submit samples of inaccurate captions](#) via a form on its website. In a later workshop led by an attorney from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), I learned that the commission is proposing new rules for captioning and caption controls. The current captioning rules are so old they don't necessarily apply to streaming services such as Netflix or Amazon Prime Video. As for caption controls, wouldn't it be nice to find a closed caption button on every TV remote control and consistency in the location of the closed caption controls on every TV onscreen menu? The FCC agrees. If you're interested in learning more about current closed captioning rules, check out the [FCC Consumer Guide to Closed Captioning on Television](#).

Speaking of Amazon Prime Video, that streaming service provided an impressive demonstration of its newest feature. "Dialogue Boost" enables you to increase the volume of dialogue relative to background music and sound effects. To date, more than 3,000 titles in the Amazon catalog have been "boosted."

And that leads me to one overarching impression from the convention. More mass consumer corporations are "tuning in" to the needs of current and potential hearing loss customers than ever before. In addition to Amazon, convention supporters included Google, Meta, T-Mobile, AT&T and Samsung. I'm looking forward to a future of enhanced accessibility.



Convention keynote speaker K. Renee Horton, Ph.D., inspired attendees with her personal story of hearing loss on her journey to become a National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) space launch engineer, vocal disability advocate and children's book author. Additional convention photos are posted on the [HLAA website](#).

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Prime Movie Speech Clarification

If you stream movies or other videos on Amazon Prime, you might be interested in a new feature they offer to help you hear the dialog more clearly.

The new setting on Prime Video, which Amazon says was designed to assist hard of hearing customers, is easy to enable. When you start playing a show, hit pause. In the **Settings** menu, look for the **Audio** option under audio and subtitles (this may differ slightly for tablet versus TV users). Under **Audio languages**, pick the setting you desire: **English Dialogue Boost: Medium** or **English Dialogue Boost: High**. You can also access this feature by going into your Prime Video account and choosing the audio and subtitle settings on your device.

While Dialogue Boost is not available for every Amazon program yet, it is already set up so you can use it for a few popular films and series, including “The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel” and “The Big Sick.”

For more information see [Amazon Prime’s announcement](#).

Improving Technologies for People with Hearing Loss

The Hearing Loss Association of America has teamed up with Gallaudet University and the American Institutes for Research to create an online community of consumers and industry inspiring more accessible, innovative, and responsive technologies that meet the needs of people with hearing loss.

The Industry-Consumer Alliance for Accessible Technology (ICAAT) provides an easy, structured way for consumers and industry to connect, work together for mutual benefit and inspire better technology from the ground up.



Industry representatives can enlist consumers with hearing loss in product research and testing activities and talk directly with consumers to learn when technology meets their needs and when it doesn't. Consumers can engage in discussion groups and research and testing opportunities, as well as share user stories about technology experiences.

Join ICAAT by visiting <https://allianceforaccess.org>.

Finding Assistive Listening Venues

There are many venues that have installed hearing loops or offer other assistive listening technologies. Here are several ways to find venues that support people with hearing loss.

HLAA has published a list of known [looped venues in North Carolina](#). If you click on that link, it will display a .pdf showing looped venues in North Carolina by city. The page has additional information on loops, how to access Google's new data about looped venues, and what you can do to encourage more looped venues.

There's an iPhone app called **LoopFinder** that you can download from the Apple App Store that will show you looped venues you can search for using a US map. Unfortunately, there's no comparable Android app.

Finally, there's a website (<http://www.alocator.com/>) that identifies venues in the US with assistive listening technology including loops. If you know of any site that provides hearing assistive technology that is not shown on the map, you can fill in an online form to have the venue added to their listings. There's a comparable app on Google Play for alocator, but unfortunately not at the Apple Store.

These sources identifying looped facilities are maintained mostly by self-reporting of the venues, so it's best to confirm with the facility that the assistive technology or loop is actually available.

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Making Closed Captions an Effective Tool

For the deaf and hard-of-hearing, closed captions are a vital tool for ensuring full access to television programs. But what happens when the tool works like a dull ax or is missing altogether?

Captions Missing

Captioning is required for most TV programs but not for commercials. If captioning for a program is missing altogether, contact the video programming distributor (VPD), which can be a local TV station, cable or satellite provider. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) maintains a searchable list of VPDs at

<https://fccprod.servicenowservices.com/vppd>.



Quality Issues

FCC rules address captioning quality and provide guidance to VPDs and programmers. The rules apply to all television programming with captions, requiring that captions be:

- *Accurate:* Captions must match the spoken words in the dialogue and convey background noises and other sounds to the fullest extent possible.
- *Synchronous:* Captions must coincide with their corresponding spoken words and sounds to the greatest extent possible and must be displayed on the screen at a speed that can be read by viewers.
- *Complete:* Captions must run from the beginning to the end of the program to the fullest extent possible.
- *Properly placed:* Captions should not block other important visual content on the screen, overlap one another or run off the edge of the video screen.

For captioning problems during non-emergency programming, you may file a written complaint with either the FCC or your VPD. If you file your complaint with the FCC, the FCC will forward the complaint to your VPD. FCC rules require that your written complaint must be filed within 60 days of the captioning problem. After receiving a complaint, either directly from you or from the FCC, the VPD has 30 days to respond to the complaint. If you filed your complaint with your VPD and they do not respond within 30 days, or if a dispute remains, you can send your complaint to the FCC.

You have multiple options to contact the FCC if you wish to file a complaint or seek assistance:

- File online at fcc.gov/accessibilitycomplaints
- By phone: 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322); ASL: 1-844-432-2275
- By email: dro@fcc.gov

For more information on this topic, check out the [FCC Consumer Guide to Closed Captioning on Television](#).

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Tech Focus: Qualification for a Cochlear Implant

Many people with hearing loss that is severe or profound could benefit from a cochlear implant but may not know what the process is to qualify for getting a CI (or two). Many do not know how much their hearing has diminished ... especially if their loss has been gradual. Qualifying for a cochlear implant involves a thorough evaluation process to determine if a cochlear implant is suitable for a person. The process typically includes the following steps:

Hearing Evaluation: A comprehensive hearing evaluation by an otolaryngologist (ear, nose, and throat doctor) and an audiologist that have experience with CIs is essential. They can assess the degree and type of hearing loss. Candidates usually need to have severe to profound sensorineural hearing loss in both ears, but the amount and type of hearing loss needed to qualify for a CI has gradually been extended in certain situations. Now, people with Single Sided Deafness (SSD) may qualify. Plus, the amount of loss is not necessarily the only factor considered. Some people with audiograms less than a severe or profound range may qualify based on poor speech recognition in cases like Auditory Neuropathy. Of course, completely deaf people including young children and even babies younger than 1 year may qualify.

Hearing Aid Trial: Before considering a cochlear implant, individuals are often required to try hearing aids for a period to determine if they provide sufficient benefit. If hearing aids do not offer significant improvement in hearing ability, they may be considered for a cochlear implant.

Medical Evaluation: A medical examination, usually involving an MRI or CT-Scan, is performed to ensure there are no contraindications such as medical conditions that might pose risks during surgery or prevent a successful outcome. Conditions that might present a problem could include things like tolerance for anesthesia, poor health, a seriously calcified cochlea that would limit insertion of the electrode array, or an auditory nerve that can't deliver the CI signals from the cochlea to the brain. But partial calcification of the cochlea or auditory nerve damage that still allows the CI signals representing enough frequencies to reach the brain may still allow the patient to qualify for an implant.

Speech and Language Evaluation: An assessment of the candidate's speech and language abilities is conducted to understand the potential benefits of a cochlear implant on their communication skills. Speech or speech understanding is not a requirement. Culturally Deaf individuals who have never understood or used speech can be qualified though prior use and understanding of speech can reduce the time to adapt to and benefit from CI(s).

Counseling: Candidates and their families receive counseling to fully understand the expectations, benefits, and potential limitations of cochlear implants. It's important for candidates to understand that the results can vary. Depending on your prior hearing story, your brain will take time to relearn (or learn for the first time) how to process various frequencies so they are perceived as they should be. Initial results, when a CI is first activated, may range from "bells and whistles" (that are real sounds that your brain doesn't yet recognize as words or actual sounds) ... to somewhat distorted but recognizable speech (that's often reported as robot-like, or chipmunk-like) ... to nearly normal sounding speech understanding (sometimes referred to as a "rock star" activation). But in almost all cases, the initial results gradually improve to dramatically better hearing than before your CI. Even music can be appreciated by many CI users, but that often takes more time and practice.

Decision-Making: After completing all evaluations, the team of audiologists, surgeons, and other healthcare professionals will determine whether the candidate is a suitable candidate for a cochlear implant. The team isn't the only decision makers; the patient must also make the decision to go ahead and to choose the CI brand and model. It helps to know that the vast majority of CI users are happy with their decision.

Keep in mind that the specific qualification criteria may vary slightly depending on the country, medical center, or insurance requirements. If you or someone you know is considering a cochlear implant, it's essential to consult with an audiologist or an otolaryngologist (ear, nose, and throat doctor) who specializes in hearing loss and cochlear implants to guide you through the evaluation process.

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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](#).



HCAA Wake Chapter

Public group · 53 members

[Sign Language Gloves](#)

Here's a [link to a YouTube video](#) of some University of Washington undergraduates, who developed sign language gloves that can create spoken language and captions of what the wearer signs. The actual video follows a brief YouTube ad that you can skip if you want. The demonstration very simplistic, and the tool has obviously been trained to recognize the name signs of the two developers, but it can handle some simple (if awkward) signs. There are several different sign language glove projects that you can find via Google, but this one has a nice YouTube video.



All the projects, so far, appear to use gloves, but it's possible to imagine that computers could be smart enough to do a decent job of recognizing, vocalizing, or captioning based on a camera viewing a person signing without gloves. Obviously, that would be a challenge, but it's hard to deny that computers are doing some amazing things.

[Wake Chapter Past Event: Member Lunch Social](#)

Members and friends filled a private room at [Lugano Ristorante](#) in Cary for a delicious lunch and delightful conversation on Saturday, July 8. Participants also donated four unused hearing aids, which the Chapter forwarded to the [Hearing Aid Project](#). The Chapter board welcomes ideas for social activities. Reply to the newsletter email with your suggestions. In the last two years the Chapter has organized outings to exhibitions at the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences and the North Carolina Museum of Art.



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