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## **Your Input Mattered!** **It's Official: President Trump Signs OTC Hearing Aid Legislation into Law!**

On Friday, August 19, President Donald Trump signed into law the Food and Drug Administration Reauthorization Act of 2017, legislation that includes the *Over the Counter Hearing Aid Act* designed to provide greater public accessibility and affordability with over-the-counter (OTC) hearing aids.

The *OTC Hearing Aid Act* is designed to enable adults with perceived mild-to-moderate hearing loss to access OTC hearing aids without being seen by a hearing care professional.

The new legislation will require the FDA to create and regulate a category of OTC hearing aids to ensure they meet the same high standards for safety, consumer labeling, and manufacturing protection that all other medical devices must meet. It mandates the FDA to establish an OTC hearing aid category for adults with "perceived" mild-to-moderate hearing loss within 3 years of passage of the legislation, and finalize a rule within 180 days after the close of the comment period.

**Follow the progress on this at:  
[www.hearingloss.org](http://www.hearingloss.org)**

## **HLAA-WI President's Message...by Jerry Lapidakis**



### **You are Invited!**

#### **HLAA-Wisconsin Annual Meeting and "Grow" Workshop**

Make plans to come to Madison on October 27 and 28 to take part in important, enjoyable events. Our state HLAA annual meeting is on Friday evening, followed on Saturday by the "Grow Your Chapter and You" workshop. The annual meeting is a time to reflect on our year, plan for next year, recognize those who have excelled, elect new state board directors and set our direction for 2018. In addition, Katie Voss from the Wisconsin Association of the Deaf will be present to discuss the proposed legislation to form a deaf/hard of hearing commission in Wisconsin. There will also be a presentation by Chantel Wiedmeyer and Caroline Ludka updating us on partnering with ODHHS on a number of initiatives. So, make plans to attend the annual meeting.

The "Grow Your Chapter and You" workshop, on Saturday, presented by National Chapter Coordinator, Erin Mirante, will give us the tools and incentives to strengthen our chapters and learn how to make the best of our hearing loss. Subjects Erin will cover include self-help, self-advocacy, peer support, coping with hearing loss, and the benefits of HLAA membership. She will also discuss what your state organization can do for you including grassroots efforts, advocating for legislation, and discussing "Where do we go from here?" as a state organization.

The meetings are a great time to connect with old friends and make new ones. An important part of getting together is sharing our mutual interest to learn from each other to hear better and increase awareness in our communities. It's a unique conclave where everyone understands us!

[Make plans now to spend the weekend in Madison and attend and take part in](#) these fun and enjoyable learning events. Erin Mirante brings an energetic message of new ideas and motivation to improve the health, not only of our state organization, but also our personal hearing situation. Not since Executive Director Ann Gilmore spoke at our convention in Madison in 2013, have we had a national HLAA representative present a program in Wisconsin.

**See meeting and hotel registration information on Page 2.**



Win some terrific prizes in a Bucket Raffle at the meeting & workshop! Proceeds will be used to provide stipends to HLAA members who want to attend the 2018 HLAA National Convention in Minneapolis.



**Annual Meeting - Friday, October 27, 2017**  
6:30 - 8:30 P.M. At Ultratech Corporation  
450 Science Drive - Madison WI  
Elections, Strategic Planning, Important Decisions  
HLAA members from Wisconsin are eligible to vote.

**Saturday, October 28th Workshop & Training 9:30 - 3:30 P.M. at Ultratech Corporation**

***“Growing Your Chapter and YOU”***

***A learning event to help improve HLAA chapters and your personal hearing loss experience.***

***Presented by Erin Mirante, HLAA National Staff/Chapter Coordinator***

***This workshop is not just for chapter leaders; it's for everyone who wants to live better with hearing loss.***

We'll look at strategies, ideas & planning that can improve chapters and/or your personal HLAA experience. Erin will cover many aspects of chapter development, including educational outreach, fund raising, marketing, advocacy, increasing membership in the organization, along with defining individual needs and setting goals.

**Location:** Ultratech Corporation, 450 Science Drive in Madison Wisconsin

**Cost:** \$30 per person, includes lunch, break snacks and all materials.

**Lodging Suggestion:** AmericInn, located a mile from the Ultratech building.

**Rates:** \$84.90 (one double bed) \$89.90 (two double beds) Guaranteed rates until October 6th. Make reservations directly with the hotel at 608-662-1990. Do not use the national AmericInn phone number.

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**Workshop Registration Form** - Please complete and mail by October 22nd. Make your check payable to: HLAA Madison. Mail to: Kathy Johnson, Treasurer, 102 Oak Court, Verona WI 53593.

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of attendees \_\_\_\_\_ X \$30 Total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I plan to attend the Annual Meeting on Friday evening Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

***Come to learn, grow and enjoy the fun! Raffle & Door Prizes!***  
***Meet HLAA folks from Wisconsin and elsewhere.***

**Captioning and a Hearing Loop will be in use.**

An interpreter can be available if requested 2 weeks in advance.

**Help us set goals for HLAA in the region. Together we can achieve so much!**

## About the Hearing Loss Association of America....

The Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA), founded in 1979, opens the world of communication to people with hearing loss through information, education, support and advocacy. HLAA holds annual [conventions](#) (HLAA2018 is in Minneapolis, Minnesota, June 21 – 24), produces [Walk4Hearing](#) events in 20 cities, publishes the bimonthly [Hearing Loss Magazine](#), [advocates](#) for the rights of people with hearing loss, and has an extensive [network of chapters and state organizations](#) across the country. The national headquarters is located at 7910 Woodmont Avenue, Suite 1200, Bethesda, MD 20814. Phone 301.657.2248 or visit [hearingloss.org](#). To become a part of the national movement to make hearing loss an issue of concern go to: [www.hearingloss.org/content/join](#)

**It costs less than a dime a day to support HLAA's mission! No Brainer!**

### HLAA's National Public Policy and Advocacy Agenda

HLAA advocates for equal access for millions of Americans with hearing loss. We work with industry & government to expand access to mainstream & assistive technologies, enforce existing disability laws, regulations & standards that impact lives. HLAA promotes self-advocacy & empowerment of people with hearing loss to ensure equal opportunity in telecommunications, employment, health care, education & community life. Full statement [HERE](#).

## HLAA Supports Veterans with Complimentary Membership and National Convention Registration

*"Hearing loss and tinnitus are the top two reported health concerns among service members both active and veterans."*

HLAA is honored to offer a one year complimentary membership in the organization to United States veterans. This includes all the [benefits of Individual membership](#), including [Hearing Loss Magazine](#), a helpful resource on the latest in technology, medical issues, legislation, personal stories, and more.

If you are a veteran and are interested in joining HLAA, please complete the [Veteran Membership form](#) and mail it, fax it or email it to HLAA.

Veterans who attend the annual HLAA National convention for the first time are eligible to receive a complimentary registration. For further information on convention registration, contact the [HLAA Meeting Planner](#). The 2018 convention is in Minneapolis. We hope to see many veterans from Wisconsin there!



There is more information for veterans with hearing loss at: [http://www.hearingloss.org/content/](#)

## YOU Spoke Up! It Mattered!

### Why HLAA Supports Over-the Counter Hearing Aids...

A National Academies of Science, Engineering & Medicine (NAS) study made a clear, evidence-based case that OTC hearing wearable devices should be available for adults with mild to moderate hearing loss. A bi-partisan bill was introduced in Congress called the Over-the-Counter Hearing Aid Act of 2017. HLAA supported this bill, and asked its members to make their voices heard. Many contacted their legislators to request support. They were heard, and this bill passed through both the House and the Senate, and has been signed by the President on August 19, 2017. [Read the full list of NAS recommendations.](#)

HLAA is supportive of OTC hearing aids for many reasons. First, an estimated 86 percent of people who would benefit from hearing aids do not get them, primarily because of high cost. HLAA believes OTC hearing aids will provide accessible and affordable hearing health care to millions of people who might not otherwise seek help. Or, for those who have sought help, OTC hearing aids could provide an affordable option.

Research shows that people usually wait seven to ten years before they seek help. By that time, hearing loss has totally disrupted their lives, impacting their communication at work, with their families, their ability to participate in their communities and in activities that give their lives meaning and fulfillment.

HLAA believes that available, affordable and accessible OTC hearing aids will encourage more people to take the first step sooner toward taking charge of their hearing health.

*HLAA does not endorse any product or service or any type of technology including hearing aids or wearable hearing devices sold over the counter or through hearing care professionals. HLAA does support quality, safe and effective technologies and hearing aids that give consumers affordable choices to make their own decisions.*

HLAA has been working diligently with lawmakers to have the consumer voice heard. We are currently working with the FDA on labeling of OTC products, product safety and consumer protection. The future of hearing health care is changing, allowing people to make informed choices. HLAA will ensure consumers have unbiased and factual information and updates about new products, regulations, and legislation as they develop.

### Don't Put Off Getting Your Hearing Checked

If you think you have a hearing loss, do not wait for over-the-counter hearing aids to come to market.

First, there will be an extended rulemaking period where anyone can comment after which the FDA has to evaluate and decide on the standards for an OTC device.

Second, not everyone will be able to get help from an OTC device. HLAA recommends seeing an audiologist or hearing instrument specialist if you are having trouble on the phone, asking others to repeat, turning up the volume on your television, or showing other [warning signs](#).

Untreated hearing loss can cause falls, isolation, depression, anxiety, and it has been shown that there is a link to cognition. Hearing loss should be prevented, screened for, and treated without delay.





*Hearing Loss Magazine* is published bimonthly and is delivered as part of membership in the organization. Readers look to *Hearing Loss Magazine* to provide them with the latest consumer based information on products, services, and research in medicine and technology. They also look for personal stories of hard of hearing people to find encouragement and support. Many *Hearing Loss Magazine* readers say they view the magazine as a "lifeline" to help them help themselves live well with hearing loss.

*Hearing Loss Magazine* is available online. Current issues are available to HLAA Members by logging into the [HLAA Online Portal](http://www.hearingloss.org/content/join). To receive the magazine, [join Hearing Loss Association of America](http://www.hearingloss.org/content/join). [www.hearingloss.org/content/join](http://www.hearingloss.org/content/join)

## HLAA Convention 2017 Highlights

By Christine Wiedmeyer AuD, Member of HLAA-WI Board

I had the pleasure of attending the 2017 HLAA national convention in Salt Lake City June 22-25, with a scholarship to offset expenses. This was my first HLAA convention and it was quite impressive. I've been to many professional conventions, but didn't know what to expect from this type of convention. I thought it was very good.

The convention started out with an optional Walk4Hearing on Thursday morning. Later was a helpful session for first time attendees to orient them to available technology and helpful tips, which I would recommend to all first time attendees. All the conference rooms have hearing loops, and all sessions had live captioning (CART) to enable maximal access to the message. There were 6 general categories of sessions: advocacy, communication, hearing assistive technology, hearing aids and implants, hearing loops, and state/chapter development.

The opening session started with the executive director, Barbara Kelley (who is quite impressive, by the way) who welcomed the attendees and summarized the progress made by HLAA during her term, particularly recent legislation like the over the counter hearing aid bill as well as collaborations HLAA has made with other groups, including the Consumer Technology Association, who sponsored the session. We heard from the outgoing HLAA Board Chair, Margaret Wallhagen, Ph.D. (also very impressive), and were introduced to the incoming Board Chair, Don Doherty. Finally, we heard from the keynote speaker, Staff Sgt. Shilo Harris (retired), who is a former Army soldier wounded in Iraq. He provided an look at the challenges that many soldiers returning from deployments face, while maintaining a great sense of humor. Attendees got to meet him and have his book autographed the next day. I have now finished reading his book "Steel Will" and recommend it for all Americans, not only those with hearing loss.

That evening we were treated to a western-themed "Get Acquainted" party sponsored by Caption Call, which is based in the Salt Lake City area. It was a nice way to mingle and get to know other attendees better in a casual environment, while learning how to rope a "bull" (the inanimate kind, thankfully) and play other fun games, eat and be entertained by real life cowboys and entertainers. Friday began with a 3 hour session, entitled "Research Symposium: Hearing Aids and Cochlear Implants: Merging Technologies, Expanding Benefits" by a panel of 5 experienced professionals. This provided an excellent summary of how hearing aids and cochlear implants work and similarities and differences between them, reviewed research regarding performance for each, and reviewed cochlear implant criteria over the years. The criteria is much less restrictive than it used to be. The panelists also covered a hybrid cochlear implant hearing aid, access to hearing technology, the role of rehabilitation post- implant for adults, and the impact of hearing loss on cognition.



Another session that had great information was on changing the culture in health care environments to provide more effective communication for those with hearing challenges. The speakers shared the basics of a guide they had developed by way of real life access problems they encountered: "Guide for Effective Communication in Healthcare" which provides information, resources, and tools to help improve communication in hospitals and doctors offices. It is divided into three sections: the Communication Access Plan (CAP), a section for patients, and a section for providers. The CAP is a tool to help those with hearing loss advocate for themselves, but the goal is that at some point, the facility will be seeking this information from the patient, instead of the patient being burdened to advocate for himself. It was emphasized that this will best be accomplished through changing the culture in the healthcare environment, rather than being forced to make these accommodations because of a lawsuit.

I attended 3 of the sessions related to Hearing Loops, and learned quite a bit! Apparently this was the first convention to have a session category dedicated to Hearing Loops due to the high interest in this at last year's convention. Our own Juliette Sterkens, Au.D. from Oshkosh was largely responsible for this, and it seemed to go over very well, based on the crowded sessions. Hopefully, this will be a regular feature at future conventions. I also was able to attend a session offering a personal perspective from hybrid CI user, who happened to be a speech pathologist from Florida. She suffered from declining hearing and offered a life-changing testimony thanks to her device. Another interesting session was on the importance of Aural Rehabilitation following CI implantation for long term success. There were also multiple demos of technology through out the 3 days, which unfortunately coincided with sessions. Another session on chapter development allowed everyone present to interact and share ideas on things that have and haven't worked well in their chapter. Interestingly, I learned that in Illinois those with hearing loss can alert their Motor Vehicle Administration so that if they are ever pulled over, the officer can see this information when he runs their license plate number, and be made aware that communication may be hindered.

The Saturday evening dinner and "Cranky Cochlea" performance by comedian Gael Hannan was very enjoyable. The exhibit hall was impressive, with over 50 vendors. My only complaint was that it was mostly available when sessions were going on, so one had to miss attending a session to talk to the vendors. I look forward to attending next year's convention in Minneapolis!

## FEEL FREE TO PRINT, FORWARD & SHARE THIS NEWSLETTER.

Our goal is to reach hard of hearing people of all ages to let them know there is a consumer based organization that is working for them as an advocate and as an educator. Your support is appreciated.

## HLAA Convention ‘Snips’ from Salt Lake City

### From Jerry Lapidakis—Madison

The 2017 convention in June was my third, and I had some thoughts that it would be pretty much be more of the same. What else could I learn about hearing loss, research, technology, advocacy, chapter building? Boy, was I wrong. I was overwhelmed, once again, by the new information and experiences provided by the convention.

Wisconsin members were very visible and involved. We had a strong presence with thirteen members attending and actively participating. Eloise Schwarz, Juliette Sterkens, John Kinstler, Nancy and Dave Gilbertson, who also received a “Spirit of HLAA Award, and I were workshop presenters. And that’s not all. The Fox Valley Chapter received a “Chapter on a Mission Award” at the banquet and first timer Neethi Magar won the HLAA Gamification contest on the convention app and received a Roger Pen as first prize. So, we were there and took an active part. Oh, and John Kinstler was at the banquet head table and did speaker introductions.

The convention sessions were varied and interesting. The hard part was deciding which sessions to attend in the six subject tracts; Advocacy, Communication, Hearing Assistance Technology, Hearing Aids & Cochlear Implants, Hearing Loops, and State/Chapter Development. I focused on chapter development which included sessions on making a chapter successful, diversity inclusion in our chapters, community integrating, to name a few.

Next year the convention will be in Minneapolis, right next door. We hope to have a good size group going. Travel expenses will be less and we can even car pool. It doesn’t get much closer than this, and is a great opportunity to attend. If you have never been to a national convention make plans to go in 2018. Most chapters and HLAA-WI, our state’s association, raise funds through donations to offer stipends to attendees, especially first timers, so look for those opportunities. Visit the HLAA-WI website for information as it’s posted. National HLAA also offers scholarships to first time attendees. You can find details on the national HLAA website ([www.hearingloss.org](http://www.hearingloss.org)).

Hope to see you all in Madison in October!

*Jerry*



### From Thomas O’Connor, HLAA-WI Treasurer - Fond du lac

The Convention was held in beautiful downtown Salt Lake City, Utah at the Salt Palace Convention Center. This year provided many subjects of interest which had themes including: Advocacy, Communications, Hearing Assistive Technology, Hearing Aids & Cochlear Implants, Hearing Loops and State/Chapter Development. There was a wide range of sessions presented on Thursday through Saturday and you had to make many decisions on which session you wanted to attend. There were several rooms setup for Demos that gave hands on demonstrations of Cochlear implants, captioned telephones, Dogs for the Deaf and Listening (practice in how to).

In the exhibit hall there were 12 new vendors presenting their products or services. All the sessions presented were top caliber in subject and I came away with more knowledge, especially in the area of the cochlear implant. I was activated with mine in January of this year with my first one and I’m loving it. But I have a lot to learn in bettering myself in the use of the implant and ensuring that I use all the rehabilitation programs available to me.

CaptionCall, a major sponsor for this convention, hosted a social event Thursday night outside of Salt Lake City. It was a fantastic party with a western theme and excellent food. A 3 piece western band had everyone dancing! On a side note, they had three trailers of bathrooms or porta-potties and it was unbelievable. It had a carpet leading up to the toilet, air-conditioning (98 degrees that day), fresh flowers next to the sink. We have the pictures to prove it!

Guest speaker at the Opening Session on Thursday featured Staff Sergeant (Ret.) Shiloh Harris who gave a very moving talk on his journey after being injured while being deployed in Iraq. He is the author “*Steel Will: My Journey through Hell to become the Man I was meant to be*”. Special events held on Friday and Saturday was the ‘HLAA Stars Come Out and Awards Ceremony and Talent Show’ and the ‘Cranky Cochlea Dinner Theater banquet

A highlight of the Awards Ceremony was Dave & Nancy Gilbertson receiving the Spirit of HLAA Award and Christine Klessing and Nancy Gilbertson receiving the Outstanding Chapter on a Mission Award for Wisconsin’s own HLAA Fox Valley Chapter. The Dinner Theater was entitled ‘Huh? Life with a Cranky Cochlea’ which was performed by the esteemed comedienne, Gael Hannan. The show was a hoot and had everyone laughing. I thought one lady was going to have a stroke; she was laughing so hard that she was almost turning blue.

The best part was seeing other people that I have met over the years, even Robert Zastrow who is 88 years of age. Last year Robert drove from California to Washington DC by himself! He is always a pleasure to talk to. Of course, I love meeting with my fellow Wisconsin chapter members. We had many discussions on what could be improved in our chapters as well as about establishing goals. I enjoyed spending time with Jerry Lapidakis, Christine Klessing, Chris Prust, David Seligman, Christine Wiedmeyer, Natalie Eberlie, Dr. Neethi Magar, Eloise Schwartz and the Gilbertsons. My apologies to them for putting up with me throughout the convention. You cannot find better friends than this group. There were other Wisconsinites there that I didn’t have a chance to meet up with.

The next convention will be held in Minneapolis. That should mean a good turnout from the 4 Wisconsin Chapters.

I can’t wait!

*Tom*







## HLAA WI Agrees to Partner with WAD on Joint Legislative Committee

In an effort to include the hard of hearing perspective, the Wisconsin Assn. of the Deaf (WAD), has asked HLAA to be a partner on a Joint Legislative Committee (JLC). John Kinstler, president of HLAA Madison, has been appointed our official HLAA representative.

Other HLAA members have volunteered as well. Others have expressed interest in participating on the Preparedness & Mental Health subcommittee of the JLC.

Recommendations will be made at the annual meeting. HLAA-WI president, Jerry Lapidakis said, "This is an opportunity for HLAA to join forces & gain a stronger voice to advocate on issues that are important to us."

**We need your input on this at the annual meeting!**

**This award winning newsletter is published twice a year. Sign up to receive it by e-mail or access it on the HLAA-WI website: [www.hlaawi.org](http://www.hlaawi.org). Instructions for sign up are below in the gray area.**

**Sign up to receive this newsletter online at: [HLAAMadison@yahoo.com](mailto:HLAAMadison@yahoo.com)**

**Make sure your spam filters don't block e-mail from the Madison address. The Madison HLAA chapter distributes our newsletter via Mail Chimp. We are grateful to HLAA Madison for providing this service.**

***"When you struggle, remember its better to be exhausted from lots of effort and learning than to be tired from doing absolutely nothing."***

*...Author Unknown*

**Editor's Note:** There are links in this newsletter that should take you directly to more information on a topic. If they are dysfunctional, it is because the connected information has been removed from the original source. We apologize for the inconvenience if this occurs.

## Hearing Loss Association of America Wisconsin State Association

### Interested in getting involved in HLAA-WI?

Each year there are a couple of vacant board positions. We always have room for people who are willing to work on committees. The HLAA-WI website has a link to the board application. [www.hlaawi.org](http://www.hlaawi.org)

It's easy to complain that hearing loss doesn't get the attention it deserves. Change happens when people with a common issue organize, learn, educate & advocate.

PS: There is never a 'right time' to get involved. Just do it!

**[www.hlaawi.org](http://www.hlaawi.org)**

### Wisconsin has an opening for a State HLAA Chapter Coordinator.

This is a volunteer position supported by a stipend from national HLAA. Responsibilities include visiting existing chapters, helping develop new chapters, and attending HLAA events such as the national convention, and state board meetings.

State Chapter Coordinators must be national members of HLAA who are hard of hearing.

If this role interests you please contact HLAA-WI president, [Jerry Lapidakis](mailto:Jerry.Lapidakis@hlaawi.org)

### HLAA-WI is a 501c3 non profit organization. Your gifts are tax deductible.

Please consider HLAA-WI in your annual giving. Send to: HLAA-WI % Tom O'Connor, Treasurer, 1149 Wedgewood Lane, Fond du Lac WI 54935. You can also donate online at [www.hlaawi.org](http://www.hlaawi.org) Thank you.

NOTE: HLAA-WI uses your donations to help defray the costs associated with our website, newsletter, captioning for meetings, and other projects. When possible, HLAA-WI provides stipends or scholarships to active members who wish to attend educational events related to hearing loss.

Board members of HLAA-WI are all volunteers who serve at their own expense because they know the HLAA mission makes a positive difference for people with hearing loss.

**Your tax deductible gift to HLAA-WI makes a difference! Thank you in advance!**



This team of 12 called 'Cora's Cochlears' raised \$2040 for the 2017 Milwaukee Walk4Hearing! Each team member registered and solicited donations with personal totals ranging from \$15 - \$850!

What a special way to make hearing loss an issue of concern! Thank you!



The foxy folks of Fox Valley Chapter's "Fox Trotters" team of 5 made the Milwaukee Walk4Hearing fun!



Mad City Walkers



Milwaukee Metro-Milers 'woman' the water station!

Note to all Walk teams: Please send us your photos. We can only use what we have. The spring newsletter will promote the 2018 Walk4Hearing. We will use them in that issue if you get them to us. Thank you!

The 2017 Milwaukee Walk4Hearing, which is also Wisconsin's Walk4Hearing, raised \$46,705 for HLAA and other Alliance Organizations this year. Thank you to everyone who participated.

The success of the walk event depends on numbers. Participant numbers; people who believe that others they know do care about erasing the stigmas attached to this invisible disability enough to provide some financial support. Money raised through the event supports programs and projects related to the HLAA mission to share information, to educate, to provide peer support and to advocate.

Money raised helps HLAA, but also helps other organizations whose missions relate to hearing loss.

We hope you'll help us raise the bar in 2018 for fund raising through the Walk4Hearing. We can double our 2017 success IF more HLAA members, and others in Wisconsin who care about this will join teams and participate.



### There are many ways you can contribute to the 2018 Milwaukee Walk4Hearing

- ♦ Walk
- ♦ Donate to a Walker
- ♦ Form a Team of Walkers
- ♦ Volunteer to help organize the event
- ♦ Become a Sponsor

[www.walk4hearing.org](http://www.walk4hearing.org) This is Wisconsin's Walk!

## WHY WE WALK

Every spring and fall thousands of walkers children and their families, young adults, young at heart and everyone in between form teams and walk in their communities to increase public awareness about hearing loss and help eradicate the stigma associated with it.

Since 2006, more than 79,000 walkers have stepped up and raised over \$12 million to support approximately 48 million people with hearing loss in the United States and funds national and local programs for people with hearing loss and their families.

Learn more at [www.walk4hearing.org](http://www.walk4hearing.org) Information about the 2018 event will be published in our spring newsletter.

Start thinking about your teams...and get those fox t-shirts ready!



# EC woman receives state honor for helping the hearing impaired

By Eric Lindquist Eau Claire Leader-Telegram staff 07-26-2017 (edited)

Helen "Mickey" Rizzi of Eau Claire, a long time member of HLAA, recently received a Wisconsin Hero Award for her decades of advocacy and participation on the Governor's Council for Deaf and Hard of Hearing under three different Wisconsin governors. The award was part of an initiative coordinated by Tonette Walker, the wife of the current governor.

Mickey, who lost her hearing at age 30, chose not to let the disability relegate her to a quiet life in the background. Instead, she became an expert lip reader and used her can-do attitude and remarkable ability to go back-and-forth between the hearing and hearing impaired worlds to jump to the forefront of advocacy efforts for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Her dynamic contributions, spanning over 57 years, to individuals and families have had a profound impact in the state of Wisconsin.

Mickey also served on multiple local and state advisory panels and was part of the core group behind the creation of a special division in the state Department of Administration to serve people with hearing impairments. What began in the early 1990s as the Bureau of Hearing Impaired is now the Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Mickey's son and daughter, recalled that their mother became a powerful voice pushing for access to tele-typewriter (TTY) devices that allow people to type messages to communicate by telephone and also lobbied for television stations to begin offering closed-captioning — now an everyday feature.

Mickey, who still regularly texts, emails and uses TTYs at age 92, saw no reason people should miss out on these essential forms of communication and entertainment just because they couldn't hear. She reminisced by telling the crowd how she remembers when only one TV show offered captioning an hour a week. She now she watches TV all the time to catch up. "We've come a long way," she said.

Mickey has been a tireless voice in her home community and in the state of Wisconsin in support of issues related to hearing loss. She facilitated access to communication strategies training for many individuals with hearing loss and has been a champion for others.

Further, Mickey has been quick to adopt technology to keep people informed about events and resources for assistive technology for those with hearing loss, even sharing her story with the Eau Claire Leader-Telegram when she elected 10 years ago to undergo an operation to get a cochlear implant to help her hear sounds after 52 years of silence.

In the 1960s, communication help for people who were deaf was extremely limited. The situation prompted Mickey and her husband, an engineer, to collaborate on developing electronic communication devices to help her overcome everyday challenges. One device linked the couple's doorbell to their home lighting system to alert Mickey when visitors were at the door, while another made the lights flash when someone called on the phone. Once the devices were perfected, Mickey shared them with others, improving the quality of life for many folks with hearing impairments.

Many members of HLAA will remember Mickey, and many more are benefactors of Mickey Rizzi's advocacy and kindness. Congratulations to Helen 'Mickey' Rizzi on this much deserved special honor.



September 1, 2017

## What Does It Mean To Have a Hearing Loss?

Understanding and addressing hearing loss can be daunting for many, especially without professional guidance.

To help consumers understand the types and degrees of hearing loss, BHI is providing new, updated information on its website.

Our new web page, "[Types of Hearing Loss](#)," talks about sensorineural, conductive, and mixed hearing loss, as well as presbycusis, noise-induced hearing loss, and tinnitus. The web page also explains in simple terms what it means to have mild, moderate, severe, and profound hearing loss.

The new web page encourages people struggling with hearing loss to see a hearing healthcare professional who can provide an accurate diagnosis and appropriately guide them on their journey to better hearing.

Feel free to share this link in your practice, local community, and on social media: <http://ow.ly/7v4D30eOM7g>



Good times at  
2017 HLAA  
convention!



We hope to see you  
in the 2018 pictures!  
Plan to be there!



## Study Shows Age-Related Hearing Loss Can Cause Communication Failures in Medical Settings 08-26-2017

It was not uncommon for older adults to report mishearing a physician or nurse in a primary care or hospital setting, according to a study published by [JAMA Otolaryngology-Head & Neck Surgery](#), [JAMA Network announced](#) on its website.

The prevalence of medical errors is higher among older patients with failures in clinical communication considered to be the leading cause of medical errors, according to *JAMA*. A previous study reported that improved communication between the medical teams and families could have prevented 36 percent of medical errors. Colm M. P. O'Tuathaigh, BA, PhD, of University College Cork, Cork, Ireland and colleagues conducted an analysis of interview data collected in 100 adults, 60 years and older, to examine communication breakdown in hospital and primary care settings among adults reporting hearing loss.

Of these adults, 57 reported some degree of hearing loss; 26 used a hearing aid device. Of the 100 adults, 43 reported having misheard a physician, nurse, or both in a primary care or hospital setting. When asked to elaborate on the context of mishearing in a clinical setting, the scenarios included (in descending order of citation frequency): general mishearing, consultation content, physician-patient or nurse-patient communication breakdown, hospital setting, and use of language.

"This qualitative analysis confirms that age-related hearing loss has a negative effect on clinical communication across both hospital and primary care clinical settings," the authors write. "We recommend that content-related and setting-related factors identified as barriers to communication in adults with hearing impairment be incorporated within a patient-centered approach to clinical communication with this patient population."

**Source:** *JAMA Otolaryngology-Head & Neck Surgery*, *JAMA Network*

## Special HLAA Hospital Kits Available for Patients with Hearing Loss

HLAA-WI has assembled special "Hospital Kits" that can be helpful in medical situations. The kits include information that helps staff know how to communicate with you. They also include a variety of materials that will identify your unique needs. There's an ID card, stickers that can be placed on your ID bracelets and charts, information on your rights as a patient with a hearing loss/disability, and much more. Hearing aids can easily be lost in a hospital setting when they are not being worn. The kits include a bag to hold your hearing personal devices when you are not using them. A pad of paper and a pen are included along with other materials that will assist with non-verbal communication, if necessary.

Having a hospital kit to use when/if needed will give you peace of mind. They sell for \$5 apiece, and are well worth having. Get one now; don't wait until you need it!

A limited number of these kits are still available. They can be ordered by contacting Chris Prust. [Chrisp625@yahoo.com](mailto:Chrisp625@yahoo.com)

## 2017 HLAA-WI Board Election

**NOTE:** The ballot that was previously included in our newsletter was incorrect. It has been rescinded and replaced with correct information. Via a link on the HLAAWI website. [www.hlaawi.org](http://www.hlaawi.org) You are eligible to vote if you are a National HLAA member & Wisconsin resident.

### LINK TO BALLOT

**Kimberly Fagar** - Kimberly was appointed to fill a one year vacancy last year and has chosen to run for a three year term this year. She is on the Madison Chapter's board, and serves as webmaster. Kimberly is a recent cochlear implant recipient.

**Namrata (Neethi) Magar** is from Pardeeville. She writes: I am very excited to apply for a position on the HLAAWI State Board of Trustees. Hearing loss has been a cause that is very close to me and is something that I interact with on a daily basis. Personally, as someone who has hearing loss and uses bilateral hearing aids and as a mother of a D/HH child. Professionally, as a physician who cares for older adults, several that deal with various degrees of hearing loss and its consequences. Advocacy has been my daily passion. I've been a member of HLAA for 3 years and have seen and benefitted from its tireless work in spreading the word about hearing loss, education, latest technology, policy change, and helping make connections with people who totally understand it. I recommend HLAA every day to my family, friends and patients. By becoming part of the Board, I intend to continue working on hearing loss education and advocacy.

**David Seligman** - David is actively involved in the Madison HLAA chapter. Although he had hearing loss as a child, he was not fitted with hearing aids until he was 26 and in graduate school. He says: "Hearing aids have made a world of difference for me." Further, "Meeting other people through HLAA who have shared support and personal experiences has been rewarding". He has attended the past three national HLAA conventions where he has gained a great deal. David is an appointee to the Governor's Council for Deaf & Hard of Hearing. He believes that the HLAA-WI Board can play an important role in initiating, supporting and promoting various efforts to improve the lives of the deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing citizens of our state, and would like the opportunity to help promote these important efforts as an HLAA-WI board member. He also wants to promote telecoil awareness and hearing loop technology.

**Emil Quast** - Is in the Madison Chapter. He is from Evansville H says he is getting 'up to speed' on pressing accessibility issues, & believe that's a high priority issue. He has lived with progressive hearing loss for 25 years, and is especially interested in advocacy.

**Write-In Candidate:** \_\_\_\_\_ (If writing in a vote, please provide a bio of the individual, and your national HLAA membership number which can be found on the label on your *Hearing Loss Magazine* that comes with membership.)

**If you plan to attend the annual meeting on October 27th, you can vote then, otherwise please vote online. Thank you.**

## **HLAA-WI BOARD**

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[jlapidakis@gmail.com](mailto:jlapidakis@gmail.com)

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[bommaklessig@gmail.com](mailto:bommaklessig@gmail.com)

**Juliette Sterkens** (Oshkosh)  
[jsterkens@hearingloss.org](mailto:jsterkens@hearingloss.org)

**Pamela Martin** (Milwaukee)  
[mmmiracle4me@aol.com](mailto:mmmiracle4me@aol.com)

**Natalie Eberle** (Madison)  
[cincinatalie@hotmail.com](mailto:cincinatalie@hotmail.com)

**Christine Wiedmeyer** (Kimberly)  
[chriswiedmeyer@yahoo.com](mailto:chriswiedmeyer@yahoo.com)

**Kimberly Fager** (Lancaster)  
[kmfager@gmail.com](mailto:kmfager@gmail.com)

### **Off Board Participants**

#### **Newsletter Editor**

**Julie Olson** (Neenah)  
[Julieo@athenet.net](mailto:Julieo@athenet.net)

#### **Webmaster & TEPP Chair**

**Colleen Van Rooy** (Appleton)  
[cvanrooy@yahoo.com](mailto:cvanrooy@yahoo.com)



Legislative Day Participants 2017

# Legislative Day Report ...and Advocating for Legislation

**Urgent! Please Read.**

On April 19<sup>th</sup>, HLAA-WI collaborated with the Wisconsin Assn. of the Deaf (WAD) and the Wisconsin Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) to hold a "Legislative Day" at the Capitol in Madison. The purpose of this event was to advocate by sharing information and concerns with our state legislators relative to the needs of people who are deaf and/or hard of hearing. Although hard of hearing people in Wisconsin outnumber the culturally Deaf population in the state by a ratio of approximately 25:1, we were far outnumbered at this event with only 23 HLAA participants registered and about 14 in attendance. It is important to understand this, because while some of our needs overlap, our differences matter greatly. Those who were listening certainly heard and saw the Deaf requests more clearly and emphatically.

Even so, it was a very positive event for hard of hearing people and HLAA. I believe it was the first time we every participated in a legislative day and the first time a group of legislators heard about the needs of the hard of hearing population.

There were four main subject areas we jointly discussed with legislators: Communication Access; a Deaf/Hard of Hearing/Deaf commission; Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services; and Interpreter Licensure. The mental health and communication issues are two that we can work on together with WAD and RID to foster. I spoke on these two topics at both the morning general session and the presentation to legislators in the afternoon. While they understand and see the more obvious needs of the Deaf, legislators were not aware of the difficulties of coping with hearing loss. It may have opened the legislator's eyes and minds to consider the scope and effects of hearing loss. I attempted to make it personal by indicating that there were probably 20% of their colleagues who miss parts of important legislative discussion due to hearing loss!

Legislators see and understand the use of sign language. They can immediately see that someone is deaf. The issues of the hard of hearing are not as obvious, and in fact, are invisible. As a group, very few hard of hearing people use ASL; nor do we identify as a 'culture'. Our preferred solutions focus on our desire to remain in the hearing mainstream supported by medical intervention and technology, and the use of oral language. Our advocacy goals embrace the availability of assistive technology in public arenas, access to affordable hearing aids, cochlear implants and add on technology that keeps us in the hearing world. We want advances in medical research and intervention. We even hope someday for a medical cure for hearing loss.

We are working hard to advance an agenda that allows HLAA and WAD to focus on areas that we can agree on. One such area relates to having access to appropriate mental healthcare services. WAD wants providers to be fluent in ASL. HLAA wants providers to have a more thorough understanding of the effects of hearing loss, and a willingness and ability to use the language we hear in to communicate with us, along with using whatever assistive technology we choose to use.

WAD wants the state of Wisconsin to fold the services of the Office for Deaf & Hard of Hearing (ODHH), and relating bureaus in the Department of Health Service and replace them with a Commission for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing. HLAA is not sure this is the right way to go. WAD needs the HLAA's 'numbers' to move their agenda forward. How do we know the right path to take?

This will be an important discussion at the annual meeting on Friday, October 27<sup>th</sup> when WAD commission committee chair Katie Voss addresses the HLAA-WI Board and membership. It is an opportunity to learn more about the commission bill and WAD's invitation for HLAA representation in other initiatives that affect us. Plan to attend the meeting and take part in this discussion.

**Please come to the annual meeting to listen, learn and be heard.**

*Jerry Lapidakis*, President of the HLAA Wisconsin Board of Trustees

## MED-EL Releases Survey Results Showing Changing Attitudes Toward Hearing Loss 08-30-2017

In honor of National Grandparent's Day on September 10, hearing implant manufacturer MED-EL USA, one of 3 major implant manufacturers, released new survey results that indicate a growing acceptance of conversations surrounding hearing loss. The survey found that family members and major life events play a key role in motivating people with hearing loss to have their hearing checked.

The new survey found that 46% of Americans know someone who has difficulty hearing, 64% have had a conversation with that person about it. 83% of adults said that they would feel comfortable talking with someone they knew if they thought they may be experiencing hearing loss, signaling a potential shift in overcoming stigma that has traditionally surrounded hearing loss.<sup>1</sup> Compared to one in five adults (22%) who said that they would be offended if someone they knew approached them because they thought they were experiencing hearing loss.

Family members play a large role in helping to motivate people with hearing loss to seek evaluation, particularly among older adults: 79% of adults 65 and over said that if a family member or loved one approached them about having their hearing checked it would motivate them to do so.

"The reality is, while some people might have a hard time admitting that they have a hard time hearing, people around them notice that communication is growing more difficult," said [Barbara Weinstein](#), PhD, professor and founding executive officer of the Doctor of Audiology Program at the City University of New York Graduate Center.

Additionally, 66% of Americans said that a major life event (eg, marriage, birth of a child/grandchild, health scare) would motivate them to get their hearing checked if they were experiencing hearing loss. In addition to changing attitudes, hearing implant technology has evolved, especially for older adults who experience severe hearing loss. Older adults reportedly represent one of the fastest growing segments of the population who are candidates for cochlear implant surgery when hearing loss progresses beyond the point of help from a hearing aid.<sup>2</sup>

This survey was conducted online within the United States by Harris Poll on behalf of MED-EL USA from June 28-30, 2017 among 2,264 U.S. adults ages 18 and older.

**Disclaimer—HLAA does not endorse products or services. Mention of such is intended to provide readers & those who attend meetings with information on products, services or research that might be of interest, & is not a recommendation or endorsement.**



### Enjoy the Game, but Protect Your Hearing!

Football games are a huge part of American culture. The roar of the crowd, the announcer on the PA system, and noisy fans all make for a festive time at football games. Being a spectator at a football game also presents dangers to your hearing. The noise at some football games has been recorded at levels equal to that of a jet plane taking off! In 2013, the fans at two football stadiums set noise records: the Seattle Seahawks hit 136.6 decibels in September, while the Kansas City Chiefs topped that with 137.5 decibels in October. Scientists, however, have shown that regular exposure to just a minute of sounds at 110 decibels or more puts you at risk for permanent hearing loss over time.

Along with your seat cushion and giant foam fingers, be sure to bring hearing protection, such as earplugs or earmuffs, to the next football game. You can still cheer, but your ears will be safer.



### A PUBLIC HEALTH EPIDEMIC - THE STATISTICS SHOW A TROUBLING TREND

**FROM 2000 TO 2015, THE NUMBER OF AMERICANS WITH HEARING LOSS HAS DOUBLED.**  
**GLOBALLY THE NUMBER IS UP BY 44%.**

26 million people in the U.S. between ages 20-69 have hearing loss.

20% of teens ages 12-19 have reported hearing loss due to loud noise



### ECONOMIC IMPACT ASSOCIATED WITH HEARING LOSS

**Lifetime costs of profound hearing loss can be as much as \$1 million per person in the United States.**







[www.hlaawi.org](http://www.hlaawi.org)

**Wisconsin needs more HLAA Chapters!** The national membership list for Wisconsin shows a concentration of members in the Eau Claire area, and also in the Green Bay area.

A priority of HLAA-WI is to assist emerging chapters. If starting a chapter in your area interests you, please connect with one of the HLAA-WI officers. People who have hearing loss are the most logical persons to make things happen. Please think about it.

**Fox Valley Regional Chapter**, meets at 6:30 PM on the 2nd Monday evening of each month from March through December (except in August.), in Appleton. The meeting room has a hearing loop and receivers for those without telecoils. CART is provided for all meetings. Contact **Colleen** or **Rhonda**: Phone contact: "T" 920-420-8462 Chapter members hail from all over the northeastern and central part of the state. The chapter has a monthly newsletter and a FaceBook page. Chapter's E-mail: [hlaafoxvalley@gmail.com](mailto:hlaafoxvalley@gmail.com)



Regular chapter meetings are preceded by a discussion group. H.O.P.E. is all about Hearing Other People's Experiences with hearing loss. HOPE discussions begin at 5:30.

Our cochlear implant support group meets quarterly. Anyone who has a CI or who is interested in learning about them is welcome. Contact Rhonda: [HERE](#)

The chapter's monthly newsletter, which is available on request via the link below, includes information about all meetings and events. It may be received online or by regular mail. We just need to know how to reach you. Let us know [HERE](#). Feel free to connect with us. **Put Newsletter Request in subject header.**

#### Lake Country Chapter (Wales)



This Chapter meets the 2nd Thursday of each month, except January, February, July & August, at The Wales Community Center, 216 W. South St. in Wales. Contact: [James Goddeyne](#) for specifics on time & meeting programs.

#### Madison Chapter

The Madison chapter meets at 6PM on the fourth Wednesday of the month at Ultratec, located at [4450 Science 50 Science Drive, Madison WI](#). Meetings include speakers, presentations, discussions and offsite social events. For more information or to sign up for our email list, go to [www.hlaamadison.com](http://www.hlaamadison.com). For information Contact: John, 608- 695-3170, [jkinstler@me.com](mailto:jkinstler@me.com). Or Lisa (608)838-6617 [lzovar@hlaamadison.com](mailto:lzovar@hlaamadison.com)



"Like" HLAA-Madison chapter on Facebook!

**Milwaukee Metro Chapter** - This chapter meets at **HEAR Wisconsin**, formerly the Center for Communication, Hearing & Deafness (CCHD), 10243 W. National Ave., West Allis, on the 3rd Monday of the month at 6:30 PM. Contact person is [Eloise Schwarz](#)

Please check with her to verify dates and programs.

**To: Wisconsin HLAA Chapter Leaders,**

Please keep your chapter contacts and meeting information up to date.

This is your newsletter! Please share photos, articles, chapter information & suggestions to the [HLAA-WI Newsletter Editor](#). Let us know what your chapter is doing. The only way we can reach hard of hearing people of all ages in Wisconsin is through you! **Share our newsletter with others. Copy it, forward it, whatever works! It is also posted at: [www.hlaawi.org](http://www.hlaawi.org)**

We reserve the right to not publish material that is contrary to the HLAA mission to open the world of communication to people with hearing loss through education, information sharing, advocacy and peer support.



#### Congratulations to HLAA Fox Valley

Chapter for being honored as "A Chapter on a Mission" at the 2017 national convention. Also to Nancy & Dave Gilbertson, of the chapter for receiving 'Spirit of HLAA' awards! ★



Christine Klessig & Nancy Gilbertson accepted *The Chapter on a Mission Award for Fox Valley HLAA.*



Nancy & Dave Gilbertson were honored with a *Spirit of HLAA Award.*