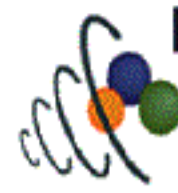


# HEAR HERE



Hearing Loss  
Association  
of Whatcom County

Summer 2008



NUMBER 2 VOLUME 1

## Char's Chat

What a benefit we receive as members of the Hearing Loss Association of Whatcom County – fellowship (for sure), personal and group support, lots of information we'd never find elsewhere, and an education about coping with hearing loss that is second to none -- let alone available state and national membership at minimal cost with so much relevant material.

Taking time to recognize all that our volunteers invest in our chapter is worth doing! We have one of the largest, most valuable groups in America. What goes on to generate our success? Just consider the list: *Everyone's annual contributions as well as fundraising support; suggesting program topics that matter to you; meeting reminders by phone and e-mail; bringing refreshments; providing photos and write-ups for our newsletter; bringing guests to our meetings; distributing our brochures to doctors, clinics, hearing aid shops, et al., contributing old hearing aids for recycling; wielding a kitchen dish towel; coming early to greet everyone; sending out get well and other cards to our members; being involved in our projects; joining our leadership team to help with fundraising, program planning, or assisting as treasurer and secretary.*

See page 2

## NEXT UP

September, 20

*ADA Compliance in Bellingham*  
Sue Hodges, City of Bellingham ADA Coordinator & Richard VanderWay, Whatcom County Museum  
Find out progress has been made to hearing accessibility in public facilities and what's on tap for the future.

October, 18

*Tinnitus II*  
Pam Spencer, M.A., Audiologist  
Pam will be presenting the second half of the presentation she began in March with lots of information on this bothersome and puzzling condition.

November, 15

*Hearing Our Best During Holidays and Travel*  
Dean Olsen, Trustee, HLA-WA  
Dean presented us with a program on cochlear implants last November and is back this year to share tips and experiences for making the most of holiday celebrations and travel.

Meetings are the 3rd Saturday of the month at 9:30 AM, Christ the Servant Lutheran Church, 2600 Lakeway Drive, Bellingham.

## DollarS & Sense

Our treasurer, Joyce Sweeney, reports that our current bank balance is \$647.31.

Thanks for your continued support!



## In the Good Old Summer Time

Our weather doesn't always show it, but this has been one HOT summer for our HLA Chapter. To begin with, at the HLAA national convention in Reno in June, Charlene MacKenzie and Bert Lederer received the *State Award of Advocacy* from the Hearing Loss Association of Washington State and the *Advocacy Team Award* award from the Hearing Loss Association of America. Read the details on page 4.

Our May program, *Preventing Falls: How Hearing Loss Affects Balance and Equilibrium* was presented by Sylvie deRham-Tortorelli, Physical Therapist at the St. Joseph Hospital Rehabilitation Center. This information was very useful to those of us experiencing these problems or anticipating them as a possibility in the future.

In June, Joel Bergsbaken of the Hearing Speech and Deafness Center and Kathy Mason, VP of our Whatcom HLA chapter presented a program on captioning and how to make the most of it. This is something that concerns all of us with hearing loss and generated lots of discussion about what we can do to assert our ADA rights.

As always, our July Potluck was great fun and wonderful food. Special thanks to Bert & Claydene for their traditional Kalua Pig!

## Chars Chat cont.

Besides your very own participation, these responses and more are what make us so worthwhile and such an enduring fellowship. Which brings me to the latest good news -- our executive committee has secured our treasurer, Joyce Moseley-Sweeney, to lead us as president in 2009! Kathy Mason, our current vice president, will pare down her job to continue this quarterly chapter newsletter, maintain our membership data base, and work on fund-raising and grants. Thank you both for your generous and talented commitment to our chapter!

**BUT**, that leaves openings for more volunteers, of course. We need more programming help and a treasurer to keep track of our funds, and so many smaller special kinds of support.

As we celebrate their efforts let's consider how we are lending our own support. Help us by giving us some of your time and talent. Book-keeping? Program planning? Greeter? Dish towel specialist? How can you give us a little bit more of yourself? This fall we shall be contacting you to join our army of wonderful volunteers. You can do it! We need you. There's a task just right for you. Let me know and make my day!!!

## HUH?

**I'm still looking for humorous hearing anecdotes for this column. In the meantime, here's another one from my experience.**

Working at a hearing aid center, part of my job was to check in patients and have them fill out intake forms. One gentleman was filling out the questions regarding his hearing such as, "Are some voices more difficult for you to understand than others?" He stopped and asked me if he should answer the questions with or without his hearing aids. I replied that he should answer them without his hearing aids, at which point he put down his pen, removed his hearing aids and proceeded to finish the questions - without his hearing aids!

*Got a good story? Let me know!*

## MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

### Whatcom County Chapter Donation

Please donate \$15 (or more) per household annually to help fund our activities. Also ask about our donation "Wish List".

### Hearing Loss Association of Washington State

\$10/year per household. Includes *Sound Waves* quarterly newsletter subscription. Donations encouraged and appreciated.

### Hearing Loss Association of America

\$25/year per household. Includes *Hearing Loss* magazine subscription.

Please make checks payable to HLA. All donations are tax deductible.

Please see our treasurer, Joyce Sweeney, for a membership form or to make your donation.

Not sure when you last paid your membership dues? Need a "Wish List" or want to join a Go Team?

Contact Kathy Mason.

733-5161 or [mason.kathy@gmail.com](mailto:mason.kathy@gmail.com)



"I said, it's the only hearing aid covered by your insurance."

Nathalie Vogt

Attending our first Hearing Loss Association (HLA) meeting in 2005, Bob and I were introduced to a woman who had a Cochlear Implant (CI). She told us that she had received her CI several years before and, although not perfect for hearing all sounds, it was such a blessing to again be a part of the hearing world.

Bob has had a hearing problem for many years but even with the most improved hearing aid his hearing was still limited. Conversation had to be one-on-one and even then he couldn't understand some voices. T.V. and telephone were impossible, movies out of the question. In restaurants with any background noise it was too difficult to carry on a conversation. He wasn't able to enjoy listening to music. His world had become very small.

We made the decision to find out whether our HMO might consider him as a candidate for an implant.

The first step was a trip to Seattle and a long, and involved hearing tests by their audiologist, with and without using his hearing aid, then a consultation for the technician and doctors to evaluate the tests. A few weeks later we received word - Bob would be considered for a cochlear implant due to the severity of his hearing loss and, best of all, our HMO and Medicare would pay for surgery and the processor.

The next step was an appointment with the surgeon who explained the process. A cochlear implant is a type of hearing aid which consists of an internal coil, electrodes, external coil, a speech processor and a microphone. The internal coil is surgically implanted in the skull behind and above the ear, and the electrodes are implanted in the cochlea. The external coil is held in place by magnets under the skin above the internal coil. The speech processor, connected to the external coil by a wire, is similar to a behind-the-ear hearing aid. Bob chose to have his left ear, which hadn't been functional for a long time, implanted. If the implant wasn't successful he would still have some hearing in the right ear using a hearing aid.

After 4 months of tests and appointments the day had arrived for the surgery. Surgery under general anesthesia was done in Seattle in the morning and by evening we returned home to Bellingham. Except for some discomfort in the ear canal for a few days all went well. Then came the long and anxious wait for the implant to be activated.

The last step was meeting with the technician who programmed the processor once the implant had healed five weeks after surgery.

Like waiting for Christmas, the day had finally come for the "turn on". On the drive to Seattle we both wondered what results we would face on our return trip home. The young lady technician was as excited as we were. After the processor was turned on, activating the implant, the computer introduced various tones. Bob said at first the sounds he was hearing were garbled but eventually became more clear. He was able to understand speech and hear traffic noise on the street. The processor had 2 settings which could be programmed for different hearing conditions. On our drive back to Bellingham we were actually able to carry on a conversation.

Over time the implant reacquainted Bob with sounds he hadn't heard for a long time, like birds singing and the sound of rain on the roof. Music still wasn't enjoyable, but conversation, the telephone and other hearing situations had improved.

This year Bob purchased a new, updated processor. The improvements include an additional program for filtering out background noise, more clarity and a program that hopefully can make listening to music more enjoyable.

We feel so fortunate that Whatcom County has a chapter with the Hearing Loss Association of America. At every meeting we learn of something new to help the hearing impaired deal with hearing loss through information and education provided by the chapter programs.

Bob's cochlear implant has made such a positive impact on our lives. We are grateful he was given this opportunity.

## HEARING ADVOCACY AWARDS GO TO LOCAL FOUNDERS

By Joyce Moseley-Sweeney



Charlene MacKenzie and Bert Lederer were presented with two awards and well wishes at the

*Award*

Loss Association of Washington and an *Advocacy Team Award* from the national organization.

Both Charlene and Bert have been local and state advocates for people with hearing loss for many years. Charlene is a co-founder and president of our local Hearing Loss Association of Whatcom County. Bert is a co-founder and past president in charge of our HLA Outreach Committee. Some of their local accomplishments are: educating and working with Bellingham officials and staff resulting in installation of sound amplification and assistive listening systems in Whatcom Museum, Mount Baker Theater and courtrooms; presenting programs and education to the Parish Nurse Program and the St. Joseph Hospital Education Center with information about hearing accessibility and sensitivity to patients with hearing loss. They have also worked with local teachers, students, shop and restaurant owners, law enforcement and the Department of Justice to address hearing loss issues.

At the regional level, they developed a program entitled "Advocacy 101" designed to educate hard of hearing people on how to "stand up for their rights." They also formed a partnership with North Cascades National Park to make the park fully accessible to hard of hearing and deaf visitors and did further training with them this summer. They developed and implemented the Hearing Accessibility Project for a local AARP Driver Safety Program and have presented several training programs in Washington State. They gave a special session on hearing accessibility during the AARP/DSP Regional Conference in Helena Montana.



Both Charlene and Bert have Hearing Service Dogs and make numerous presentations to community groups as advocates for HLA and ambassadors of Dogs for the Deaf in Oregon and Alaska. Together they help us carry out the mission statement for Whatcom County: "together, we open the world of communication to people with hearing loss, providing information, education, support and advocacy." In our community and region, we who are hard of hearing are fortunate and grateful to benefit from such hard

### *Classified Ads*

*Hear Here* will be accepting hearing-related ads from HLA members at no charge. Ads must be submitted by e-mail or snail mail by the first Saturday of the month. E-mail should be sent to Kathy Mason. E-mail and mailing address are on the back page of the newsletter. Also include your name and contact information in case we have any questions. In the future we may be accepting ads from business for a small charge to help support the newsletter.

#### **Hearing Aid Wind-fall Coming!**

Two like-new \$5,600 Phonak Savia behind-the-ear hearing aids available at \$1,000 each. Our president, Charlene MacKenzie, has found even better technology to benefit her. Buyer will need new ear molds and re-programming -- nothing more. Spencer Audiology will provide this service at a nominal cost. Trial possible; satisfaction guaranteed! Contact Char at 738-3756, [charmackenzie@comcast.net](mailto:charmackenzie@comcast.net), or speak to her directly.

**This space reserved for your ad!**

# WHAT'S NEW?

This might be an opportunity for HLA to do some advocacy work in our area. Read the next two articles and see what you think. What other facilities would you like to see "in the loop"?

## **Ford International Announces New Hearing Loop System Facility becomes the only U.S. airport to offer assistive listening system**

News Release: June 11, 2008

Contact: Bruce Schedlbauer,  
Marketing and Communications Manager  
Gerald R. Ford International Airport  
616-233-6053

Gerald R. Ford International Airport officials are pleased to announce the installation of a hearing loop system on both airport concourses. This system enables individuals with telecoil (T-coil)-equipped hearing devices to have public address system announcements transmitted directly to their hearing aids. This assistive listening service is available at all airline gates and hold-room areas. "The Aeronautics Board is delighted to offer this new service to our customers who use assistive hearing devices," said Aeronautics Board chairman John Van Laar.

"By the direct transmission of gate and flight hearing announcements to T-coil-equipped hearing aids, this loop system will significantly enhance the airport experience for people with hearing loss."

Hope College psychologist and hearing assistance advocate David Myers noted that "this is a pioneering and model installation – the only airport in America to broadcast announcements throughout its concourses via people's own hearing aids. It puts the airport loudspeakers right in our ears!" Moreover, said Myers, "with hearing loops now in some 250 area worship places and public facilities, West Michigan has become the leading edge of a national movement to provide hearing aid-compatible assistive listening to people with hearing loss."

Vic Krause, former president of the Hearing Loss Association of America Grand Rapids Area Chapter, and Myers were invited to make a presentation on hearing loops to the Kent County Aeronautics Board in December 2006.

"On behalf of HLA-GR, I want to thank the Aeronautics Board for making an investment in the hearing loop system that will benefit thousands of airport passengers with a hearing loss," Krause said.

"For a person with a hearing loss to be able to hear gate and flight announcements with T-coil-equipped hearing aids will eliminate frustration and confusion and possibly even a missed flight."

Additional information about hearing loop systems is available at [www.hearingloop.org](http://www.hearingloop.org).

Gerald R. Ford International is the second busiest airport in Michigan, and ranks among the top 15% of busiest airports in the U.S. The airport currently serves approximately 2 million passengers annually.

## **HLAA meets with Acting Surgeon General**

**May 12, 2008, Washington, D.C.:** Brenda Battat, executive director of HLAA arranged for a meeting with acting Surgeon General Steven K. Galson to talk about the need for more public education about hearing loss. HLAA invited six other stakeholder groups to join the meeting at which they stressed the need to start a public dialogue about the causes, impact on physical and psychosocial well being of untreated hearing loss, treatment options available, the stigma effect and the need to protect hearing from noise. There are 31 million Americans with hearing loss with 10 million resulting from noise exposure that could have been prevented but cannot be reversed. Hearing aids are effective devices but they are underutilized with less than 25 % of people who could benefit actually using them.

**CONTACT YOUR CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVE TO ASK THEM TO SUPPORT THE HEARING AID TAX CREDIT BILL**

**HR 2329** provides a tax credit of up to \$500 per hearing aid, available once every 5 years, towards the purchase of such hearing aid, available to: 1) individuals age 55 and over, or 2) those purchasing a hearing aid for a dependent. **HR 2329** is not intended to cover the full cost of hearing aids, but will simply provide some measure of financial assistance to the groups who are most in need of these devices but are unable to afford them: those approaching or in retirement, and families with children.

As of October 2007 HR 2329 had 60 cosponsors and the Senate Bill, S 1410 had 7. To see if your Senator or Congressional Representative is a co-sponsor of the Hearing Aid Tax Credit go to

<http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-in/bdquery/z?d110:HR02329:@@L&summ2=m&>