

Summer 2010



JOYCE'S VOICE

I'm writing on Memorial Day after returning from a walk with my hearing dog, Ku'a, through the Bay View Cemetery. Colorful flowers and fluttering flags adorned many of the graves. A spectacular row of flags reminded me of those veterans who have served our country and gone before us. I'm thankful for those veterans and those still with us, including my husband, Mike.

I'm thinking how we hard of hearing folks are veterans too. According to the dictionary, a veteran can be "a person of long experience in some occupation or position." We are veterans of hearing loss, and many of us have met and overcome obstacles in our efforts to cope. I've been a hearing loss veteran for around 30 years, and have come a long way in accepting, understanding and coping with my loss.

I'm thankful for a set of good, high tech hearing aids and assistive listening devices that make it possible for me to do my job and hear the sounds and people around me. If not for my aids, I would have to rely on some of the antiquated devices that Pam Spencer reminded us about in her presentation, "We've come a long way, BABY!"

I'm also very thankful for our HLA group. We're experienced hard of hearing veterans and novices willing to support each other, share information, get education and advocate for our rights. We've come a long way together and have a ways to go. Keep coming to our meetings and know that you belong.

By the way, on our walk, Ku'a told me of an approaching bicyclist coming up from behind, so I am thankful for my "veteran" hearing dog also!

HLA Schedule

July 17, 11:30 AM - 2:00PM Summer Luncheon – Feast and Fun It's time once again for our annual summer pot luck. Bring your favorite pot luck dish and enjoy good food and great company.

August 21 "Curtain Call" – More of Our Own Talent, Pastimes, and Hobbies. Prepare to be impressed ...again!

September 18 "Hearing my Way through Italy and Greece"

Charlene MacKenzie, World Traveler

Welcome Recent Newcomers - Stay Awhile!

Mike Hess

Michelle Easton

Vic Harber

CI Group Schedule

July 17th 11:30 AM-2:00 PM

Summer Pot Luck Luncheon with HLA Whatcom County

September 25th 9:30 AM-Noon

Phone with Confidence,
Sound and Way Beyond, Troubleshooting
Linda Day, Cochlear Awareness Network Manager
Pacific Northwest Territory
Cochlear Americas Corporation

October 23rd 9:30 AM-Noon

Med-El's Bridge to Better Communications
Dr. Jamie Williams, Au.D.
Clinical Account Manager, Northwest Region
Med-El Corporation



Member Profile

For her dedication to and passion for a better quality of life for the hard of hearing, Hear Here has chosen Charlene Mackenzie for our first Member Profile. Without her endless efforts Whatcom HLA would not exist.

Charlene MacKenzie Submitted by Bert Lederer

Charlene co-founded the Hearing Loss Association Whatcom County six years ago and has been the primary driving force behind its continuing success. She has served as President and Vice President and currently is Program Coordinator and a member of the Executive Committee.

Before founding the Whatcom group, Charlene was President of the Hearing Loss Association of Skagit County, having previously served as Vice President.

Charlene is a long-time member of the Hearing Loss Association of America and a recipient of its 2008 National Advocacy Award. She also is a recipient of the Hearing Loss Association of Washington's Award of Excellence in Advocacy and has served on its Board of Trustees for the past four years.

Charlene helped organize the Washington Communications Access Project (Wash-CAP) in 2009 and currently serves on its Board of Trustees as Secretary.

Charlene moved to Bellingham ten years ago after retiring as Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator for the California State Department of Transportation. She received a proclamation from the State Legislature for her outstanding and dynamic contributions in achieving accessibility in the workforce for people with disabilities.

Charlene and her Hearing Dog partner, Lola, reside in Fairhaven.



We would like to profile one of our members in each upcoming Hear Hear. If there's someone you'd like to know more about or that you'd like all of to know more about, please let me know.

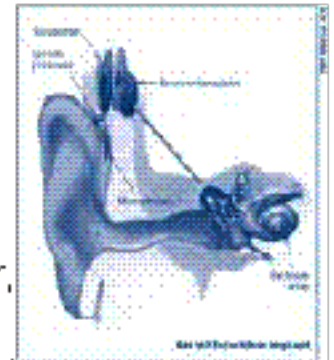
Kathy Mason, Publisher

Cochlear Implants

What is a cochlear implant?

A cochlear implant is a small, complex electronic device that can help to provide a sense of sound to a person who is profoundly deaf or severely hard-of-hearing. The implant consists of an external portion that sits behind the ear and a second portion that is surgically placed under the skin (see figure). An implant has the following parts:

- » A microphone, which picks up sound from the environment.
- » A speech processor, which selects and arranges sounds picked up by the microphone.
- » A transmitter and receiver/stimulator, which receive signals from the speech processor and convert them into electric impulses.
- » An electrode array, which is a group of electrodes that collects the impulses from the stimulator and sends them to different regions of the auditory nerve.



An implant does not restore normal hearing. Instead, it can give a deaf person a useful representation of sounds in the environment and help him or her to understand speech.

How Do Cochlear Implants Work?

A cochlear implant is very different from a hearing aid. Hearing aids amplify sounds so they may be detected by damaged ears. Cochlear implants bypass damaged portions of the ear and directly stimulate the auditory nerve. Signals generated by the implant are sent by way of the auditory nerve to the brain, which recognizes the signals as sound. Hearing through a cochlear implant is different from normal hearing and takes time to learn or relearn. However, it allows many people to recognize warning signals, understand other sounds in the environment, and enjoy a conversation in person or by telephone.

What does the future hold for cochlear implants?

With advancements in technology and continued follow-up studies with people who already have received implants, researchers are evaluating how cochlear implants might be used for other types of hearing loss.

NIDCD is supporting research to improve upon the benefits provided by cochlear implants. It may be possible to use a shortened electrode array, inserted into a portion of the cochlea, for individuals whose hearing loss is limited to the higher frequencies. Other studies are exploring ways to make a cochlear implant convey the sounds of speech more clearly. Researchers also are looking at the potential benefits of pairing a cochlear implant in one ear with either another cochlear implant or a hearing aid in the other ear.

National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders
NIH Publication No. 09-4798
Content updated: August 2009

Good News About Captioning

Bert Lederer

This month may mark the first time a cable network provides captions to a streaming webcast simultaneous with a live TV broadcast. World Cup games are being captioned live on the Internet at www.ESPN3.com. This proves that captioning TV programs on the Internet can be done for little or no added cost.

Netflix subscribers have more good news. Netflix has begun offering optional closed captioning on a limited number of Watch Instantly titles. There currently are about 100 movies streamed with captions and many more to come as the technology rapidly develops. Most all of Netflix's thousands of mail order movies DVD's (some in Blue Ray format) are excellently captioned though they may be billed as "Subtitles for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing."

Google and You Tube are increasingly offering captioned videos. The trend is in the right direction and we should be seeing more captioning in the future as many individuals and organization press hard for accessibility to broadcast media and other forms of audio-visual entertainment.

IF MY HEARING LOSS IS CONSIDERED A DISABILITY, WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS?

The ADA has important protections relating to state and local government, public accommodations and transportation. The law requires state and local governments to give people with disabilities equal access to programs, services, and activities. This encompasses such areas as public education, transportation, recreation, health care, social services, courts, voting, and town meetings.

The ADA also prohibits exclusion, segregation, and unequal treatment by "public accommodations" and transportation providers, such as buses, trains, restaurants, retail stores, hotels, movie theaters, private schools, doctors' offices, day care centers, recreation facilities, and other places open to the public. (More next time on WA State Laws)

Congressman Jim McDermott (D-WA) Supports Hearing Health Care

Congressman Jim McDermott (D-WA) added his name to the growing list of members of Congress cosponsoring H.R. 3024, the Medicare Hearing Health Care Enhancement Act. Patients with hearing health care needs across the country are delighted to see Congressman McDermott backing legislation that provides greater access to audiology services. His support is especially noteworthy given his seniority in the United States House of Representatives and his background as a physician. H.R. 3024 was introduced on June 24, 2009, by Congressman Mike Ross (D-AR) and has gained over 70 cosponsors this session. The Hearing Loss Association of America is among the many organizations that endorsed this bill.

HLAA e-news May 18, 2010.

(Congressman McDermott represents the Seventh District which encompasses Seattle, Vashon Island and portions of Shoreline, Lake Forest Park, Tukwila, SeaTac, and Burien.)

Here a response I sent Congressman McDermott by email:

Just want to thank you for your efforts on behalf of the hard of hearing by co-sponsoring H.R. 3024, the Medicare Hearing Health Care Enhancement Act. It's a first step in the right direction toward appropriate provision of hearing health care for those of us who struggle with it on a daily basis. Please don't stop there, however. Medicare needs to cover the cost of hearing aids and other assistive listening devices as should insurance companies. They provide for eye glasses so that we can see and any number of other prostheses, but not hearing aids, which some may argue is just as important and in some cases more so.

Helen Keller said it best, "I am just as deaf as I am blind. The problems of deafness are deeper and more complex, if not more important than those of blindness. Deafness is a much worse misfortune. For it means the loss of the most vital stimulus-- the sound of the voice that brings language, sets thoughts astir, and keeps us in the intellectual company of man." She also made the observation that "Blindness separates us from things but deafness separates us from people."

Thanks again and keep being our hero.

*Kathy Mason
Hearing Loss Association of America, Whatcom
County Chapter Member*

If you would like to contact him go to:
http://mcdermott.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=18&Itemid=55

Court Says Theaters Must Make Movies Understandable

POSTED ON MAY 4, 2010 BY JOHN WALDO

www.wash-cap.com

Wash-CAP (Washington Communication Access Project) won the first round in our movie-captioning case against five corporate defendants when the court ruled that under Washington law, theaters must do what is "reasonably possible" to make their movie soundtracks understandable.

The order from Superior Court Judge Regina Cahan said that the specific steps each theater must take will be decided later at trial.

Her ruling came on cross-motions from Wash-CAP and the theaters. The theaters argued that nothing in Washington law requires theaters to do anything more than open their doors to people with hearing loss, and treat us exactly the same as everyone else.

Wash-CAP argued that under Washington law, treating us just like everyone else wasn't sufficient. Our state law says that when "same service" – treating us just like everyone else – doesn't permit us to fully enjoy a business's services, the business must offer "reasonable accommodation." Our state law defines "reasonable accommodation" as taking those steps "reasonably possible in the circumstances" to make all services "accessible," which in turn is defined as "usable or understandable."

Judge Cahan agreed with us. While she did not specifically endorse captioning, and did not state exactly what any of the theaters must do, she did say the theaters would have to do whatever is "reasonably possible," and she intends to determine at trial exactly what that may be.

Trial is scheduled for March 21, 2011.

In a sense, this ruling is a little anti-climactic, coming as it does on the heels of last week's decision by the Ninth Circuit Court that the Americans with Disabilities Act can require closed captioning. But for a number of reasons, a decision under our Washington state law will be better for Washington movie-goers than a decision under federal law.

So now we see what the theaters do. Will they fight to the death in Washington – not a particularly good venue for them in light of our excellent state law – or will they fold their tents here and save their legal "firepower" to fight the Ninth Circuit decision?

What I think we can say with considerable assurance is that meaningful access to the movies for people with hearing loss is a whole lot closer to reality today than it was last week.

"Talkies" Heard Through Bones In First Theater for Deaf



Dr. Hugo Lieber, of New York, demonstrates how pressure of his new "oscillator" on any head bone permits the deaf to hear "talkies." A Chicago show house uses the device.

WHAT is claimed to be the only theater in the world offering talking picture entertainment for the deaf is now operating in Chicago.

Hearing is made possible by an "oscillator" which literally enables the hard-of-hearing to "listen" through their bones. Every seat in the Chicago theater is equipped with the new device. Devised by Dr. Hugo Lieber, of New York, the unusual instrument is no larger than a sugar lump. It is attached to the end of a lorgnette handle and can easily be hidden in the palm of the hand. Pressure of the oscillator against any bone of the skull permits the sound waves to travel through the bony structure of the body to the middle ear. A tiny rheostat on the connecting cord regulates volume in proportion to the listener's deafness.

Those of sound hearing also may attend the theater and are in no way annoyed by the operation of the oscillator. There are no loud or discordant noises to distract those with normal hearing.

USABLE NEWS!

This from HLA member Dorothy Morrow - I would like you to spread the word that for a QUIET LUNCH (AND CHEAP) I recommend Poppe's at the Lakeway Inn. They have a daily blue plate special for \$5.50! Fridays it's halibut and chips (or salad). If one sits in a comfortable booth it is very quiet and pleasant and the food is great. We go at noon and sometimes are the only people there for some time.



THE HLAA ANNOUNCES NEW VIDEO SERIES ON HEARING LOSS

Bethesda, MD: Get accurate information about hearing loss, its causes and what to do about it. The Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) contracted with Knowlera Media to produce a series of seven, four-minute, captioned videos on hearing loss. Information to adequately brief someone on hearing loss is all in one place in an easy-to-access format.

If you think you have a hearing loss or know someone who does, please point them to the videos where hearing health care professionals and people with hearing loss talk about what you can do about it.

The message throughout the videos is that just about everyone can be helped with their hearing loss. But the first step is to acknowledge it and get a proper diagnosis. John K. Niparko, M.D., otolaryngologist at the Listening Center, Johns Hopkins Hospital, says, "It is a mistake to ignore a hearing loss and simply live with it."

The Hearing Loss Association of America gathered a team of hearing health care professionals to cover the following topics:

- Hearing Loss Basic Facts
- Hearing Loss Symptoms
- Hearing Loss Diagnosis
- Hearing Loss Treatments
- Living with Hearing Loss
- Hearing Loss Causes and Prevention
- Hearing Aids, Cochlear Implants and Assistive Listening Devices

In addition to sound medical and audiological advice, two Hearing Loss Association of America members, Reed Doughty and Bonnie O'Leary, talk about their hearing loss.

Reed Doughty, Washington Redskins safety, first obtained hearing aids during his NFL career. He says, "When I first got with the Redskins, I was not wearing hearing aids. I finally got hearing aids and it really improved my ability to be able to pay attention, to interact in the locker room, and engage in conversations that previously would have been very difficult."

He goes on to say, "For me growing up there was a stigma and looking back I wished I would have gotten hearing aids earlier. Kids need to have self-esteem and put themselves in the best situation for school and for a fun and active lifestyle."

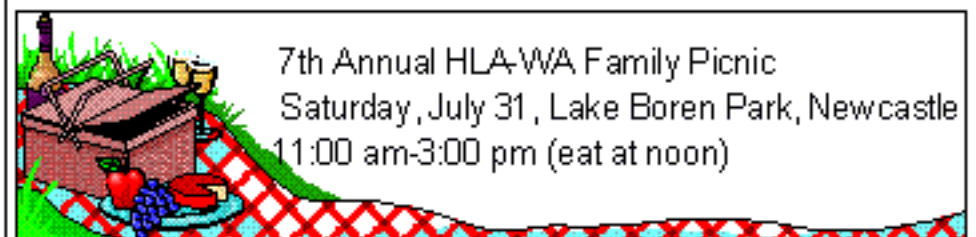
Bonnie O'Leary, late-deafened adult and now a certified hearing loss support specialist, said it was her children who first noticed her hearing loss. "They would talk to me from the back seat of the car and I didn't answer or they talked to me from another room and I heard them talking but I couldn't understand them. Finally, my son said, 'Mom, I don't think you are hearing quite the way you used to.'"

The last video includes suggestions for finding mutual support through HLAA Chapters and information about the Hearing Loss Association of America and the work it does on behalf of 36 million people with hearing loss in the United States.

The message throughout is that hearing loss is a major public health concern and you do not need to hide it. With the right help, hearing loss is a daily challenge you can overcome.

The open-captioned and non-captioned versions of the videos are on www.monkeysee.com, the website known for its "See how the experts do it" videos. The videos can be found under "Health and Fitness." Once you get to the videos, the caption versions appear when you click the tab "All Videos by This Expert." The videos also appear captioned on www.hearingloss.org and www.YouTube.com.

Knowlera Media also makes the videos available to their 300+ websites that license their video content. A shortened broadcast news version of the videos will be added to Knowlera Media's news library and made available to local television stations across the country that license their content. In the Washington, D.C., area, WRC-NBC Channel 4 uses their content on television.



Join us at our annual picnic and bring your family and friends. WE WILL PROVIDE hot dogs and condiments, bottled water, ice, paper plates, cups, napkins, and eating utensils. PLEASE BRING a potluck dish to share (salad, dessert, etc.) and a beverage if you want something other than water. A folding chair and a blanket are handy, too.

DIRECTIONS: Lake Boren Park is located in Newcastle, between Factoria and Renton. Traveling South on I-405, just after the I-90 interchange, take Exit 10, Coal Creek Parkway SE. Go about 4 miles. There is a small lake on your right. Turn RIGHT onto SE 84th Way (stop light). Look for a small brown sign high on a pole with the words "Lake Boren Park."