



Featured Presentation

TUESDAY, JANUARY 6

NOON - 1:00 PM AT ST PAUL'S PARISH HALL AND ON ZOOM:

Bill and Suzanne Johnston

What to Know Before Your Next Trip to Rochester's Airport: Communication Tips & Access Sources for People with Hearing Loss

Navigating a trip to a busy airport these days can be very difficult. And if you are hard of hearing, deaf or blind, it can seem impossible. That's why we invited Bill Johnston, Deputy Director of the Frederick Douglass Greater Rochester International Airport, to be our guest speaker on January 6th. Mr. Johnston plays a key role in ensuring communication and wayfinding access for all visitors to Rochester's airport. Joining Bill is Suzanne Johnston, MA, CCC/SLP. A speech and language pathologist with over 30 years of experience, Suzanne is a board member of HLAA Rochester with expertise in Deaf/HOH needs and accommodations for communication. Together the Johnstons will share means of facilitating communication in new environments with unfamiliar partners, what technology and resources are available at Rochester's airport to facilitate clear communication for air travel, along with three tips for preventing communication 'mishaps' during travel.



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Thank you to our members who are bringing refreshments to our January meeting: **Catherine Battaglia, Anand Choudri, Pete Fackler, Doug and Nancy Meyer.**

Additional January Meetings and Programs

TUESDAY, JANUARY 6

10:00 AM - 11:00 AM IN PERSON, ST PAUL'S VESTRY ROOM: HOPE Session: 'Hearing Other People's Experiences': Joe Kozelsky CCC/A:

Prospective, new, or experienced hearing aid users informally share their experiences, questions, and hearing loss journeys.

11:00 AM - 11:30 AM AT ST PAUL'S PARISH HALL: Conversation and light refreshments.

11:30 AM - NOON AT ST PAUL'S PARISH HALL: Chapter announcements and business meeting.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 13

7:00 PM - 8:30 PM ON ZOOM: Board of Directors Meeting

THURSDAY, JANUARY 15

10:00 am - 2:00 pm: Assistive Device

Demonstration Center: Technology Team. In person. Lifespan, 1900 South Clinton Avenue. See Page 7 for details.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 20

7:00 - 8:00 pm on Zoom: Professional Advisory Committee (PAC)

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 21

8:00 - 9:00 pm on Zoom: *Hear Together.*

Kristin Bergholtz CCC/SLP./Carly Alicea Au.D/Ph.D. For parents and caregivers of Deaf/hard of hearing children. See page 7 for details.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 22

7:00 - 8:00 pm on Zoom: HLAA Book Club

See back cover for details.

Please check our Chapter Website [hearinglossrochester.org](https://www.hearinglossrochester.org) for any changes

President's Message

by Nicholas Sprague, Chapter President

Happy New Year, Rochester HLAA Members! I wish you all the best in the year to come. I hope the past year has been a good one, hopefully including an HLAA event or two as well! Today, I'm going to do something a little different, and highlight one particular HLAA event that I believe is an invaluable part of HLAA-Rochester. Sit back and relax as I take you along on a field trip to the Assistive Device Demo Center!



I stopped by Tuesday, November 20th to see for myself what was going on at the Demo Center. I arrived around 11 AM at Lifespan, 1900 S. Clinton Avenue, a huge facility where the Demo Center occupies a large room just steps away from the entrance. Plenty of parking nearby and no appointment necessary, just walk right in! I stopped briefly at the Lifespan front desk to sign-in, got a visitor sticker and was on my way to the Demo Center.

Walking into the Demo Center, I was immediately greeted by several friendly faces. Looking around the room, the tables were filled with various electronic devices of every shape and size. You might briefly wonder if this was a collection of James Bond spy devices rather than an incredible selection of various assistive listening technology! Now to clarify, you're not going to find actual hearing aids here. The focus here is "assistive listening devices" - not traditional hearing aids. These are devices that anyone can use in everyday life to make listening easier.

Any number of helpful volunteers will be happy to show you around and answer questions you might have. Charlie Johnstone, Lorin Gallistel, Eric Matson, Dan Brooks, Bruce Nelson, among others! Such an incredible wealth of knowledge. All of the volunteers have given so much energy to this project, all donating their time. The Demo Center has been running since 2017, and it would not be what it is today without them.

Now, on to the fun stuff!

Do you have your TV volume so loud that your spouse has started to complain? If so, check out a system that sends the audio to your own personal speaker or headphones where you can personally control your volume. Do you need a visual alert if a phone, doorbell or smoke alarm is ringing? You can check out some simple devices that you can use at home everyday or even bring to hotels when traveling. You can also see how a captioned phone works in person ... Did you know they

are available FOR FREE to qualified people? There are knowledgeable people here that can tell you all about that! Are you curious what types of assistive listening devices you might find at a local theater or event? Take a look at how an infrared receiver works or put some headphones on and listen for yourself how an FM or Auracast system works. I strongly encourage you to spend some time checking out Auracast while you're there. If you haven't heard yet, this might be the next big thing in the world of hearing tech! If you see Dan Brooks while you're there, ask him about it because he may know more about it than anyone.

Now you may be thinking, "but I don't want to listen to sales pitches for these devices." Well, I have great news for you, you won't! One of the best parts of the Demo Center is that they don't sell anything! You just get to try these devices while you're there and decide what might or might not work for you, before you go out and buy the device somewhere. Your visit to the Demo Center is FREE and is just about getting information and trying things out.

Before I left for the day, I also took advantage of another great service offered - a free hearing screening! Peter Leas was set up in a nearby room where in just a couple minutes you can see if a trip to an audiologist might be in your future. This isn't the full test an audiologist

would give you, but this will certainly let you know if you have any hearing loss. At the end of the test you can even listen in the headphones to see how things might sound with a hearing aid versus without. Peter tells me the reactions he sees from people when they hear the improved

sound for the first time are incredible! I can vouch for that as coincidentally my mother-in-law was there the same day as me, and she had one of those Aha! moments herself. Her suspicions of hearing loss were confirmed and she's headed to see an audiologist soon.

Towards the end of my visit, I had the pleasure of seeing HLAA Board Member and Nazareth professor, Dr. Betsy Rynnion, who had brought her class of Nazareth students to the Demo Center. These were future speech pathologists - all getting hands-on experience with devices they may very well be utilizing or recommending in the future. So great to have the students there, and I'm thankful there is a place like this that everyone can experience!

As you can guess, I had a great day at the Demo Center. If you haven't gone already, I can't recommend a trip there enough! No appointment needed, just walk in, and take advantage of this wonderful service that HLAA-Rochester provides!



What's New at HLAA New York State Association

On November 19th, more than a dozen HLAA members from the Rochester, New York City and Westchester chapters attended the special Open Captioned performance of the award-winning musical *Ragtime* at the Vivian Beaumont Theater of Lincoln Center, underwritten by the three chapters and the HLAA New York State Association. The underwriting sponsorship, which was featured prominently in the day of performance Playbill, honored Theater Development Fund (TDF) accessibility director Lisa Carling for her 42 years of service advocating for hearing accessibility in live theater. It is worth noting that TDF has provided grants to Rochester cultural organizations for captioning and ASL services, including the Geva Theatre Center.

Before the performance many of our group, including Sue and Scott Miller from Rochester, joined together for dinner at Friedman's restaurant in Manhattan.

Please enjoy the photos from the November 19 performance of *Ragtime*.

Steve Wolfert

President, HLAA New York State Association



HLAA Rochester Book Discussion Group

by Jenn Lowden, Director of the Chili Public Library

At November's HLAA Rochester's book club, we had our highest number of attendees yet! We had some new faces from Rochester, and we were so pleased that three of our attendees "zoomed" in from sunny Florida!

We had a great discussion of the book, *My Sister's Voice* by Mary Carter. This was a 2012 fiction title about a young Deaf artist, Lacey, who had a difficult childhood growing up in a disabled orphan's home. One day she receives a letter telling her she has a twin sister. This revelation shocks her to her core. As the story unfolds, Lacey has to reconcile that her hearing twin had a normal childhood and all the emotions that come with that. But the reason for their separation proves to be complex and profoundly moving.

Our next book discussion will be on Thursday, January 22 at 7:00pm on zoom. We will be discussing *Volume Control: Hearing in a Deafening World* by David Owen. In this 2019 book, the author acknowledges the stigma and cost of hearing aids, but inaction comes with a social cost. He demystifies the science of hearing while encouraging readers to get the treatment they need for hearing loss and protect the hearing they still have because "...ears, whether they're working or not, are endlessly interesting."

Please email Jennifer Lowden at libraryladyjenn@gmail.com if you wish to attend the discussion. A zoom invite will be emailed a few days before the discussion date.

Do You Have Unused Hearing Aids?

The Finger Lakes Region Lions Hearing Foundation collects used hearing aids, has them refurbished, and makes them available to eligible individuals based on financial need. It covers 29 counties in the Finger Lakes, Central, and Southern part of NYS.

Dr. John McNamara also works with the Lions Club and also with the Ethnics Foundation to send hearing aids to Zambia.

If you have a hearing aid you're no longer using, you may drop it off at Ontario Hearing, 2210 Monroe Ave. or to the Lions. For further information, please call the Lions at (315) 704-4962, or you may send an email to: FLXLionsHelpYouHear@gmail.com.

You can also bring them to an HLAA meeting and we will make sure they are delivered to the right place.

Introducing Professional Advisory Committee Member (PAC) William Marshall Jr.



I was born in Trenton, New Jersey, and spent my childhood on my grandparents' farm in Georgia during the era of segregated schools, businesses, and public facilities. I began my education in Pavo, Georgia, attending a one-room schoolhouse where one teacher taught five grades.

Family has always been central in my life. I am the oldest of six children, with a sister between each of the boys. In fifth grade, I was bused to a new school in Coolidge, Georgia, where I completed the eighth grade before attending Magnolia High School in Thomasville. I graduated in 1965 as part of a class of 104 students.

Shortly after graduation, I moved to North Rose, New York, where I worked at Duffy-Mott in Wayne County for a year before relocating to Rochester. I began what would become a thirty-year career at Xerox. During my time there, I married in 1967 and welcomed three daughters. At age fifty-one, with three decades at Xerox, I was asked to help organize the company's Habitat for Humanity efforts, and I also pursued opportunities

in modeling. Following an injury, I retired from Xerox in 2012.

Throughout my career and afterward, I have remained deeply committed to community service. I have participated in numerous organizations, including the Xerox JC, and I founded two neighborhood associations: the Central Park Neighborhood Council and the Central Park Businessmen's Association. I am proud to be the grandfather of four grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

There is far more to my journey than can fit on a page, but I am grateful to HLAA for the opportunity to contribute. I look forward to continuing my work engaging churches, libraries, and other community partners during my time here.

Birthdays

Happy Birthday in January to:

3 Paul Stager	23 Charlie Johnstone
7 Art Hirst	24 Brent Shaub
11 Judith Bernhart	30 Chris Suffredini

Captioned Entertainment Around Rochester



JCC Center Stage - Tickets and information are available at www.jcccenterstage.org or (585) 461-2000. Please specify "Captioned Area". Tickets are \$35-40 with discounts for JCC members, full time students and seasonal subscribers. All captioned performances are on Sundays at 2 pm.

The Little - The Little Theatre provides options for people with hearing loss, including hearing amplification headphones in all theaters. The hearing amplification headphones can also be used for descriptive listening.

Theatres 1, 2, 4, and 5, are equipped with Hearing Loop Systems. Personal captioning devices are available for all theaters. Please inquire at the box office.

The Little offers open caption screenings when available. Open captions mean captions are visible to everyone, and cannot be turned off. Open caption screenings are currently shown on Thursdays, along with the first matinees on Sundays (please note some films do not have an open caption version). You can find Open Caption shows via thelittle.org (listed in the showtimes on each film page), and on social media.



The REV (Merry-go-Round) Theatre in Auburn has a state-of-the-art Assistive Listening System, which makes use of FM to transmit sound over radio frequency directly to the listener's ear. While the overall system is FM, they also have individual induction loops for each device. For information about the REV Theatre's productions, see <https://therevtheatre.com/>

GEVA Theatre Center - Open Captioning for patrons with hearing loss is provided during the 1st Saturday matinee and both performances of the final Wednesday of each Wilson Stage Series production, and the first Saturday matinee of each Fielding Stage Series production. When booking your seats, mention your interest in open captioning in order to secure the most advantageous view of the display on the right of the stage.

RBTL Live Theater - Open Captioning, made possible by HLAA, is offered during most 1 pm Sunday matinee subscription performances of the Broadway Season, and select other performances. A text display scrolls words in synchronization with the dialogue and lyrics of the show. Reserve seating in view of the captioning screen in advance or request open captioning for unlisted events, 585.222.5000 or mail@rbtl.org.

Roc Cinema has a hearing loop and some Saturday matinee movies are open-captioned.

OFC Creations Theatre at Winton Place has an FM system and receivers with hearing loops for T-coils.

Other Theaters - Regal Theatres, Cinemark Theaters, AMC Theaters, and Movie 10 all indicate on their websites that they have closed captioning devices available by asking at the box office. The Strand Theater in Brockport, has individual displays on goosenecks available.

Our Story

by Ralph and Kathy Wiegandt

How to begin.

Kathy and I, I being Ralph who has the hearing loss and Kathy my partner-in-hearing-loss, will attempt to make “our” story interesting. It is a common one. I (Ralph) likely has a life-long hearing loss, noted first in one ear nearly 60 years ago at a draft physical. It was not severe enough to keep me out of the draft. I either ignored it or it wasn’t severe enough to seek treatment until about 7 years ago. By that time “what did you say”, differences in how loud the TV/radio was, and constant hearing challenges in the world at large finally became too great. An audiogram revealed a moderate to severe hearing loss and a resulting prescription for hearing aids. During the ensuing years we learned that dealing with hearing loss is greater than just getting hearing aids. Although my common sensorineural hearing diagnosis has been improved by hearing aids, we all know there is no perfect treatment or technology solution. Constant learning and compensation strategies are required to overcome challenges. With wifely encouragement we came to HLAA, where questions can be asked, and there is a welcoming community to help others with hearing loss.

On the human-interest side, Kathy and I have been married for nearly 46 years. We have two children and four recent grandchildren. Our son Eric has a year-old daughter and lives in Springfield, VA. He is a software developer and his wife works in public policy and



(still) has employment at HHS, having dodged the Dode (Department of Government Efficiency). Our daughter Anna, in Glenmont, NY, has a three-year-old son, and boy-girl twins born last February. Music is central in their household. Anna is a classically trained harpist and has served as the harpist for the Syracuse Orchestra for the past few years, less frequently now for obvious reasons. Her husband is a saxophonist and high school music teacher and band director. Among all their music accomplishments, they are probably unique in being a harp saxophone duo, and have transcribed several pieces for their performances.

Kathy and I have been retired for nearly eight years. Kathy had a career as a computer programmer and software developer; Ralph’s work has been in the museum field as an art and artifact conservator. He worked for most local museums and regional historical societies and beyond. We are glad to be retired and now spend time with our three rescue dogs and volunteer in various capacities. Kathy tutors in math for the Rochester City Schools multiple days a week in 1st and 3rd grade. Ralph tutors in ELA for a 5th grader, and with Kathy, for the Notre Dame Learning Center, an after-school program in the city. We hope our efforts are a small help. Kathy is an avid gardener and she has transformed the yard of the house we have owned for 34 years. It is always a work in progress, and she is currently planning a raised-bed enclosed vegetable garden in her “perennial” battle with the deer. Ralph picked up the violin in the past few years, reconnecting with a very early, long abandoned experience. We are both working hard to delay the ravages of age by healthy living and exercise—with limited success knowing it is a losing battle. Reading, learning, staying current in world events, and political activism are very important to us.

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Assistive Device Demo Center

Our chapter proudly sponsors the Assistive Device Demo Center, offering members and the public a chance to explore the latest devices designed to ease



hearing loss challenges. At our demo sessions, you'll find Signaling-alerting devices, Captioned telephones, and Personal assistive listening devices, with special focus on TV listening and noisy environments.

Knowledgeable chapter members will be available to answer any questions.

Join us on the 3rd Thursday of each month, September through June! The next session is **Thursday, January 15th**, from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm at Lifespan, 1900 S. Clinton Ave. Sessions are free and open to everyone. We look forward to seeing you there!

Sometimes More Than a Hearing Aid Is Necessary: Things You Can Get or Use

Excerpted from "HEARING, HEARING LOSS AND HEARING AIDS; A Primer and Handbook for Consumers,"
A book in progress, by Joe Kozelsky, Audiologist

CAPTIONS

There are two forms of captioning to assist hearing in group listening situations. They are **closed** captions and **open** captions. Closed captions are viewable by only one user at a time for each device. On the other hand, open captions can be viewed by as many people as there are within the viewing range of the caption display devices.

CLOSED CAPTIONS

Although only one user at a time can view closed caption devices, more than one viewer at a time can use a closed caption device. There is virtually no limit to the number of viewers who can use a closed caption device.

Below is an example of a closed caption device used in a movie theater. The captioning is usually perfectly synchronized with the movie and is easy to read once the device is properly aligned with your seat and the movie screen.



Movie Theater Closed Caption device⁵

At the theaters we frequent, they do not ask for any security or your license. This is probably because they cannot be used anywhere else, and they are awkward to carry around.

They are about 24 inches or more including both the cupholder base and the gooseneck adjustable stem to which the viewing device is attached. Recall from the Preface that our movie group was unaware of the devices at first, but now several people use them for each performance we attend.

OPEN CAPTIONS

Open captioning is another group assistive "listening" technology for persons with hearing loss. Open captioning consists of a visual display unit placed on or near the stage which presents the words as they are pronounced. The larger the caption device, and the more numerous they are, the more people there are who can take advantage of the open captions. As such, open captioning allows individuals with early hearing

loss who do not use hearing aids, as well as individuals with more advanced hearing loss who do use hearing aids, to better follow the spoken dialog.

In most locations, however, only a few if any, of the performances are open captioned for each production. Accordingly, it is necessary for people to search through the dates of the performances to learn when and even if, open-captioned performances will be presented.

COMPREHENSION IS PARAMOUNT

Often, auditory assistance alone is not able to adequately compensate for deficient word recognition loss, or for severe, or unusual hearing loss configurations. Open captioning is a valuable assistive technology for the fuller enjoyment of artistic presentations.

Our chapter has encountered resistance when they have approached theater staff to consider the use of open captioning for some of their productions. The production and artistic staffs have had understandable concerns that the caption displays could detract from the settings of the performances.

However, performances consist of both visual and auditory components. As significant as the visual components are, comprehension of the dialog is paramount. If members of the audience are unable to clearly comprehend the dialogue or to keep up with it, some of the impact of the performance is lost.

Actually, the primary component of any performance is the words and the way they interact with each other. The words are the first element in the construction of a performance. If the words had no value, then there would be no purpose in the presentation. The creator of the performance wants, and needs the words to be heard and perceived

This becomes critically important when there are twists and turns in word order or phrasing. Side comments are often lost for people with hearing loss or more advanced years because they are unexpected or uttered in a different manner from the previously heard dialog.

In addition to the population with hearing loss, it would seem that open captioning could be an important assist for people of more advanced years because of the well-known increase in processing times for older people.

It is possible there could be an unknown number of potential theatergoers who do not attend theater

(Continued on page 7)

CONSUMER BEWARE!**The truth behind “Hearing Aid Coverage”***by John McNamara Au.D.*

This is the time of year when insurance companies work their hardest to attract consumers to sign up and join their plans. Unfortunately, their marketing often includes misleading claims—especially when it comes to hearing aid benefits.

Many insurers advertise that they “cover” hearing aids, but they fail to mention the caveat of restrictions that are attached. Instead of providing true financial assistance, they route patients to designated third-party vendors that are limited to device options, technology options, and minimal service support that is typically essential to long term hearing success.

Despite the glossy marketing, the insurer typically contributes \$0 toward the actual cost of the hearing aids so the consumer ends up receiving far less value and flexibility than they would if they had chosen an independent practice of their choice.

WHAT STEPS CAN YOU TAKE

Before assuming you have real hearing aid coverage, become an educated consumer—ask direct questions.

Does your insurance carrier actually pay something toward your devices?

Can you choose your provider freely?

Are you guaranteed comprehensive service, adjustments and choice of hearing aids including high quality technology if recommended?

Don’t let insurance marketing mislead you. Understanding their tactics helps to ensure that you receive the quality care you deserve.

Open Door Mission Collection

The Open Door Mission in Rochester restores hope through essential resources. Our chapter supports this cause—please bring gently used items to monthly meetings. Marlene Sutliff and Bill Marshall will deliver them as a meaningful act of service from our members.

Did You Miss a Meeting?

Do you want to see it again

Videos of our Program Meetings are online:

<http://bit.ly/4fqb4lo>

Hear Together: Kicking Off the New Year Nationwide*by Carly Alicea, Au.D., Ph.D.*

Our first nationwide *Hear Together* meeting in November was a wonderful success! Families from several states joined us on Zoom, bringing fresh perspectives, new voices, and a shared commitment to supporting one another on the journey of raising children who are deaf and hard of hearing. Seeing parents from across the country connect so naturally reminded us how powerful community can be - no matter the distance.

The conversation was lively and thoughtful, with families exchanging ideas, sharing experiences, and offering encouragement to one another. We are excited to see the group continue to grow as more parents and caregivers hear about *Hear Together* through the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA). With CART services now included at every meeting, we’re also grateful to be able to make the space more accessible for all who attend.

As we move into the new year, we warmly welcome any parent or caregiver of a deaf or hard of hearing child to join us. Whether you’re newly navigating hearing loss or have been on this path for years, you’ll find understanding, connection, and support among this group.

We kindly and respectfully remind our community that *Hear Together* is intended exclusively for parents and caregivers. We ask that professionals, students, or others looking to observe or learn refrain from attending so that families can share openly in a private, supportive environment.

We’re grateful to everyone who joined our first national meeting and look forward to seeing this community continue to grow in the months ahead.

Our next meeting will be on Wednesday, January 21, from 8–9 pm EST on Zoom. We hope to see you there!

... More than Hearing Aids*(Continued from page 6)*

because of their inability to keep up with the dialog. It is wondered if audiences would be larger if highly visible open captioning was available for more performances. It is important to keep in mind that older persons are one of the primary segments of the audiences for many performances. It takes longer to process auditory signals as age increases. Open captioning allows people both with and without hearing loss to enjoy performances they would otherwise not be able to.



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December
14



February
15

OC Open Captioned Performance Dates



CenterStage Theatre at the JCC
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The logo for the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) Rochester Chapter, featuring a stylized graphic of three people in green, orange, and purple, with the acronym 'HLAA' in large blue letters.

HEARING LOSS BOOK CLUB

LET YOUR MIND WANDER THROUGH BOOKS!

Join us for a captioned Zoom discussion of the book:

Volume Control: Hearing in a Deafening World by David Owen

THURSDAY JAN. 22 7:00PM-8:00 PM

- Moderated by Jennifer Lowden, Director of the Chili Public Library and member of HLAA.
- Email libraryladyjenn@gmail.com if interested in attending. A zoom link will be sent out a few days before the discussion.
- This book is available for purchase from Amazon, or borrowing from the Monroe County Library System and Overdrive/Libby

A stack of several books in various colors, including orange, yellow, and red, arranged in a slightly staggered manner.

Our Meetings are Hearing Accessible

We meet in St. Paul's Episcopal Church, East Ave. and Westminster Rd., across from the George Eastman Museum. Parking is available at the George Eastman Museum, if needed.



All meetings are audio looped and captioned. Our chapter meetings will also be streamed on Zoom, with captioning. See our website at **hearinglossrochester.org** to sign up for access to all future meetings. Please register at least 24 hours before the first meeting you wish to attend, so that you will receive the link by email.

Everyone, with or without a hearing loss, is welcome to join our meetings online or in person.