Telephone: (585) 266-7890
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Website: https://www.hearinglossrochester.org



Volume 40, Number 2 October 2026

## Featured Presentation

**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6**

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

### Adam Sheppard, AuD, PhD, F-AAA and Maria Gallina, AuD,

### "Tinnitus, Hyperacusis and Effective Treatment Options"

Please join us on Tuesday, October 6 at noon for an informative session on tinnitus—the persistent, high-pitched ringing in the ears that occurs even without an external sound source. Tinnitus is not a disease itself, but a symptom of an underlying condition, and understanding that distinction is key to effective management.

Our presenters from Ontario Hearing Center, Adam Sheppard, AuD, PhD, F-AAA, and Maria Gallina, AuD, will also address hyperacusis, a condition that causes painful sensitivity to everyday sounds.

The doctors will explain the common causes of tinnitus and hyperacusis, the connection between tinnitus and hearing loss, and the treatment options available today. They will also discuss what individuals can realistically expect when managing these common hearing challenges.

### HLAA-NYS Conference Reimbursement

The HLAA Rochester Chapter will be offering $300 to each chapter member with a two-night hotel stay during conference dates, October 2-4, and current with their '26-'27 annual Chapter dues.

Please complete the NYSA Conference offering form at `https://bit.ly/HLAA-Reimburse` with a copy of your hotel stay for Friday and Saturday nights.

Email to Carol Loftus at `cloftus3@gmail.com` or mail to Carol Loftus, 6001 Redfield Drive, Farmington, NY 14425.

We look forward to seeing many Chapter members in Saratoga enjoying all that has been planned by the NYSA Conference committee.

## Additional October Meetings and Programs

**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6**

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

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, OCTOBER 13**

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

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15**

**10:00 am - 2:00 pm: Assistive Device Demonstration Center:** Technology Team. In person. Lifespan, 1900 South Clinton Avenue. See Page 6 for details.

**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20**

**7:00 PM - 8:30 PM ON ZOOM:** PAC Meeting

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 21**

**7:00 PM - 8:30 PM ON ZOOM:** HOPE in the Evening

**8:00 - 9:00 pm on Zoom: *Hear Together*:** Kristin Bergholtz CCC/SLP./Carly Alicea Au.D/ Ph.D . For parents and caregivers of children with hearing loss. See page 2 for details.

**FRIDAY-SUNDAY, OCTOBER 2-4** NYS-HLAA Conference in Saratoga Springs

**NEXT MEETING: TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 3:** Honoring Veterans with Hearing Loss:

Please check our Chapter Website `hearinglossrochester.org` for any changes

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Thank you to our members who are bringing refreshments to our October meeting: Cathy Battaglia, Christine Rankie, Kathy Sweryda, and Dan Wolf

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## A Step Forward for Hearing Aid Battery Packaging

*By Neil Snyder*

### Industry is Listening to Consumers

Many members of our community have told us the same thing: safer battery packaging for children is important, but should minimize the impact on usability for older adults. Some manufacturers have begun trying to address this issue.

At the American Academy of Audiology (AAA) convention in April, Energizer's Rayovac brand showcased new hearing aid battery packaging designed to be "senior-friendly." Although cutting is still required, the update shows that manufacturers and companies respond when customers speak up.

### Why Hearing Aid Battery Packaging Changed

Child-resistant packaging for zinc-air button cell hearing aid batteries became a requirement in March 2024. The goal was to prevent ingestion by children and to meet federal safety requirements from the Consumer Product Safety Commission under Reese's Law.



A selection of Rayovac's redesigned, senior-friendly child resistant hearing aid battery packages. Image credit: Rayovac

A key provision in this law states: "battery compartments containing replaceable button cell or coin batteries must be secured such that they require the use of a tool or at least two independent and simultaneous hand movements to open."

However, many hearing aid users, particularly older adults, people with arthritis, tremors, neuropathy, low vision or limited hand strength, struggle with battery packaging meeting those requirements.

### What's in the New Packaging

HLAA representatives who attended the AAA convention observed that Rayovac's updated packaging includes:

A redesigned method of opening battery compartments with scissor slots

Clearer, more visual instructions on the package to guide users through the opening process

Continued child-resistant certification in independent testing




Labeling shows how to open new, senior-friendly hearing aid battery packaging. Image credit: Rayovac

That combination of safety, clarity and iteration suggests that industry is paying attention to real-life experience, not just compliance with checkboxes.

Tool-dependent packaging is not a small inconvenience for users with dexterity issues. It may:

- Limit independence
- Create a risk of cuts
- Reduce hearing access by discouraging battery changes
- Impact air travel, as some scissors are not permitted in carry-ons
- Lead to improper storage of unused batteries when removed

The redesigned packaging from Rayovac is intended to address most of those issues. HLAA celebrates this advance as progress toward the goal of child-resistant packaging that doesn't restrict access to people who need them for assistive devices. We look forward to seeing industry and regulators continue to work on this issue together.

### Hearing Aid Battery Packaging Tips

Follow these helpful tips if you wear hearing aids or cochlear implants and find it difficult to open child-proof battery packages:

1. Consider upgrading to rechargeable devices when it's time to replace them.
2. Experts recommend using ergonomic, heavy-duty utility scissors with safety blades to cut through the tamper-resistant plastic on either side of the battery.
3. Reuse older dispensers or purchase a battery caddy with individual hearing aid battery compartments to keep unused batteries separate and protected after removing. DO NOT collect them in a pouch or bag, as they will discharge upon contact with each other and exposure to air.
4. When traveling, bring spare batteries in a caddy or pack TSA-approved scissors with blades under 4" in your carry-on bag.
5. Try the new senior-friendly Rayovac packaging or search online for "easy open hearing aid batteries."



Hearing aid battery caddy with individual compartments.



By Neil Snyder, director of public policy for the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA). Neil's background spans more than 20 years of federal advocacy for hearing health and a decade on Capitol Hill. He can be reached at advocacy@hearingloss.org.

# BLUETOOTH, Classic and Low Energy (Bluetooth LE)

Excerpted from Chapter 15 of "HEARING AIDS DO WORK, A Primer and Handbook for Consumers" A book in progress, by Joe Kozelsky, Audiologist

Note: during the summer of 2026 the title of the book was changed to "HEARING AIDS DO WORK, A Primer and Handbook for Consumers."

## BLUETOOTH ASSISTIVE DEVICES APPLICATIONS

There are two types of Bluetooth broadcast applications: Classic Bluetooth and Low Energy Bluetooth, designated as Bluetooth LE.

### Classic Bluetooth

Bluetooth has been and will continue to be a major development for hearing aid users. Bluetooth makes the use of peripheral equipment and assistive devices extraordinarily easy and flexible. Further, because Bluetooth is becoming universally available and is compatible with a wide variety of different devices, the cost of adding peripheral equipment or special purpose ALDs for different hearing needs may be dramatically reduced.

Disadvantages. The signal can be accessed by only one user at a time on a first come-first served basis. This is not a serious limitation though when Bluetooth is used as a personal ALD. Because only one person can access the signal at a time, Classic Bluetooth is useful for personal communication devices rather than for group assistive listening systems.

The loudness of the signal is governed by the sending device rather than the receiving units, which in the case of assistive listening devices means that the cell phone rather than the hearing aid controls how loud the signals will be. Finally, Classic Bluetooth has been an all-in or all-out option. That is, if the listener is in Bluetooth mode, then the microphones of the hearing aids are cut out, and only the Bluetooth signal is heard through the hearing aids.

### Low energy Bluetooth – Bluetooth LE

Low Energy Bluetooth also known as LE Audio or Bluetooth LE, has overcome most of these limitations. With Bluetooth LE there is no limit to the number of listeners who can access the same signal. Further, multiple or even many different Bluetooth LE signals can be presented in a single location at the same time thanks to a new broadcast system known as Auracast.

### Auracast

Auracast will be a "Game Changer." Auracast is a universal Low Energy Bluetooth technology developed by a special interest group of Bluetooth innovators. Auracast broadcasts can be accessed by anyone with compatible receiving devices including hearing aids. Reception is not via a smart-phone but it is likely that the phone which is connected to a receiving device such as hearing aids can be used for channel selection. The alternative to having a compatible hearing aid is an Auracast receiver outfitted with a neck loop or headset directly connected to the Auracast receiver.

As such, it is likely that in addition to use as an assistive listening device, Auracast Bluetooth Low Energy signals can serve as a personal listening device for anyone with an Auracast receiving unit such as a smart-phone whether they have hearing aids or not. Further advantages of Auracast are discussed below.

Not only will Low Energy technology enable Bluetooth to be accessed by an unlimited number of people as said, but additionally, it will enable signals to be broadcast on multiple channels at the same time enabling different listeners to access a channel of their choice with the ability to easily switch from one channel to another. The primary example given is that individuals with compatible receiver devices or hearing aids will be able to select any one of the different events on multiple televisions in a sports bar simply by selecting the event of their choice on their smart-phone.

Another consideration could be events which are presented in different languages at the same time such as international sporting matches or international conferences. The possibilities will be endless. Current thinking is that Auracast Bluetooth applications will not immediately replace existing group and personal Assistive Listening Technologies but will likely be used in parallel with them for years to come.

If the hearing aids are Auracast "enabled", the manufacturer's smart-phone app automatically detects all Auracast channels within range and displays a list on the smart-phone which in turn is connected to the hearing aids. The user selects the channel. Some smartphone's Bluetooth device selector may also have an Auracast selector.

If the hearing aids do not have Auracast, a separate Auracast receiver can be used. The receiver also automatically detects all Auracast channels within range and displays a list. The user selects the desired signal. Receivers can be purchased with either headsets or neck loops. As of this writing, there is no user charge for the Auracast phone app for ReSound users. Currently the Auracast hearing aid adaptation is not cross-manufacturer compatible.

It will not be long before the other hearing aid manufacturers have their own Bluetooth LE Auracast systems available. Changes are coming out every few months… and it is a challenge to keep up.

Note: "Thank yous" go out to Lorin Gallistell and Chas Johnston for their invaluable help with section about Bluetooth LE and Auracast.

## Ask the Audiologist… WHAT IS BLUETOOTH and HOW DOES IT WORK WITH HEARING AIDS?

*by Dr. John McNamara, AuD*

The best way to explain Bluetooth is to associate it with what most of us are already familiar with-FM radio stations. With radio reception most of us are comfortable understanding that the music and DJ's voices (and advertisements, of course) are sent from a radio station to your radio- The signal is sent through sound waves via dedicated FM (frequency modulated) channels and the sound waves are bounced off "pick up" towers to send the signal to your radio. So basically each radio station is assigned a "channel" to send their signal through. You get to choose which channel (radio station) you want to listen to simply by changing the FM channel on your radio- and then you connect, voila!



This "FM" method was similarly used in classrooms and theatres to reach hearing impaired individuals and provide a direct signal that eliminated a lot of background noises. Unfortunately, both the sender (equivalent to radio station) and hearing impaired individual (equivalent to your personal radio) had to have external boxes to send and receive the signal and the 2 stations had to be on the same channel. The major problem with this system was that the signal often had external interferences that made the sound pick up spotty or unreliable.

Bluetooth was developed in the 1990's to eliminate a lot of the interference or breakdown that occurs from traditional FM systems. Bluetooth still uses FM radio waves but the signal (channel) is assigned to a very narrow restricted band (2.4GHz), far away from traditional radio stations. Within the given 2.4GHz radio band, Bluetooth does something very unique and drastically different from traditional FM systems. It discovers your Bluetooth signal, it connects (ie: headphone, car, hearing aids) and then locks in to your device only, so no one else can interfere or share the signal. In addition the unique thing Bluetooth does is continually shop around all the available frequencies (channels) within the 2.4Hz range to assure that you always have a secure connection. It hops around the 2.4GHz range up to 1600 times per second to lock in to the best connection so you always have a good signal. One limitation to classic Bluetooth, until the creation of Auracast (which is a whole different conversation), was that it could only communicate to one receiver at a time. The sender couldn't share its signal with multiple receivers.

It took a while for hearing manufacturers to utilize Bluetooth technology into their hearing aids simply because classic Bluetooth technology required more

*(Continued on page 6)*

## Cochlear Implant Group Update

*by Peter Fackler*

The HLAA Rochester Cochlear Implant Group hosted representatives from Cochlear Corp at their first meeting of the program year, Wednesday September 2026. The cochlear implant group meets four times a year with evening meetings conducted via Zoom. Future meetings are scheduled for Wednesdays at 7 pm -- December 9, 2026, March 17, 2027, and May 12, 2027. To receive information regarding future meetings, please email `cochlearimplantgroup@gmail.com` to be included on the mailing list.

The meeting with the Cochlear Corp reps attracted over 30 persons. Several attendees from Rochester were joined by friends from Long Island, San Francisco, Louisville, Phoenix, Cleveland, Indianapolis, suburban Philly, Westchester County, New York City, Saratoga Springs, and state of Florida. We have truly become a national group in our makeup.

As is customary and routine, the assembled group had much to offer in comments and questions for our presenters. Along with the typical recounting of specific concerns and questions regarding individuals' ongoing CI experience, there was much interest regarding Auracast and when Cochlear's CIs may be able to benefit from the new, emerging technology. The current macro environment for Auracast still lacks commonly arrived at standards among Auracast products, thus making for a challenging environment for providers such as Cochlear. They are silent concerning when their "firmware" will be ready to open the Auracast door for Cochlear CI users. Interestingly, the Cochlear reps seemed mildly surprised to learn from us that Auracast is being rolled out in many public venues and that the demand from CI users for access is a real and profoundly felt need.

The December 9 meeting of the CI Group will be either a pass-the-mic affair or will feature another of the cochlear implant providers (Advanced Bionics or Med-El).

## Open Door Mission Donations

The Open Door Mission appreciates your donations of gently used clothing and personal items. The needs of our unhoused and immigrant neighbors remain great. Marlene Sutliff and Bill Marshall will collect donations at the October 8 meeting. Thank you for supporting HLAA Rochester and our community.

## Hope in the Evening

If you are unable to attend the morning session, HOPE in the Evening is available on Oct. 21st from 7 - 8 p.m. on Zoom! Join retired audiologist, Joe Kozelsky for an informative 'round table' discussion of other people's experiences with hearing loss.

## 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 theatre has Auracast and an FM system,

**The Little** - The Little Theatre offers hearing-assist options, including amplification headphones (also usable for descriptive listening) in all theaters. Theatres 1, 2, 4, and 5 have Hearing Loops, and personal captioning devices are available—ask at the box office. Open-caption screenings run on Thursdays and the first Sunday matinees when available (some films lack OC versions). Open-caption showtimes are listed at thelittle.org and on social media.

**Robert F. Panara Theater**, named in honor of RIT's first Deaf professor and founder of the NTID Drama Club, has a rich heritage of offering challenging, entertaining, and provocative works of theater, all created for both Deaf and hearing audiences. Information about upcoming performances are online at https://www.rit.edu/performingarts/panara-theatre#upcoming-events.

The REV (Merry-Go-Round) Theatre in Auburn uses a state-of-the-art FM Assistive Listening System, with each device equipped with its own induction loop. Learn more about their productions at 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, provided by HLAA, is available for most 1 pm Sunday matinee Broadway subscription shows and select additional performances. A text display scrolls dialogue and lyrics in real time. The auditorium is Auracast enabled. Reserve caption-view seating or request captioning for other events at 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 .

## Assistive Device Demo Center

Our chapter proudly sponsors the Assistive Device Demo Center, offering members and the public an opportunity 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, October through June! The next session is **Thursday, October 17th**, 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!

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## Donate Your Unused Hearing Aids

You may donate your unused hearing aids to the The Finger Lakes Region Lions Hearing Foundation to be refurbished for those in need.

You may drop them off at Ontario Hearing, 2210 Monroe Ave, or bring them to a chapter meeting.

## SEPTEMBER 8th HOPE SESSION

*by Joe Kozelsky based on notes by Christine Rankie*

We had a much larger group of participants than usual, with 23, and possibly seven who were newcomers.

There was a wide range of interests and questions. Most interest was about getting hearing aids. There was also someone there who had a question about cochlear implants. I hope she was aware of meeting of the Cochlear Implant Group on the next evening run by Pete Fackler. I'm not sure that we mentioned that to her. I suspect it would be available on line in a few days.

Here the main topics we touched on:

- Auracast and T Coils
- Choosing an audiologist
- Working effectively with your audiologist
- Bi-CROS hearing aids, CROS stands for Contralateral Routing of Signals. This means that the signal is picked up on the bad side and sent over to the good or better side. BiCROS means that both sides have hearing loss, but one side is better.
- Steps in getting used to HAs
- Sources of information re: getting HAs
- Audiologist vs HIS
- The importance of active follow up with provider
- Life span of HAs: usually five to seven years due to deterioration or changes in technology
- What's available at the HLAA Demo Center

Since there were several who had questions about getting hearing aids, we spent a fair amount of time talking about it. We stressed the most important part of getting hearing aids is the provider. And the best way to find a good provider is to ask around of people who have hearing aids. Ask them where they got them from, how they like them and how often they have been back for further service.

It was stressed that both users and providers need to engage in "Active Follow-up." Active Follow-up means to keep following up with your provider or patients until problems are resolved. Then maintain follow-up activities after that on a regular basis.

There was a question about hearing sounds and brain hearing which we were unable to answer at the moment. This is so important that we will open our next meeting with a brief discussion of "Brain Hearing".

Here's a fun ditty, that my son found on line for me when I first started using hearing aids.
"I liked you better deaf."

## *Hear Together*: Parent & Caregiver Support Group on October 21st

*by Carly Alicea, Au.D., Ph.D.*

Hear Together is a supportive community for parents and caregivers of children with hearing loss. Sponsored by HLAA, the group offers a welcoming space to connect with others who understand the joys and challenges of raising a child who is hard of hearing or deaf.

Meetings provide time to share experiences, learn practical strategies, and explore topics such as early intervention, school supports, communication choices, advocacy, technology, and social-emotional well-being.

Whether you're new to a diagnosis or further along, Hear Together emphasizes connection and encouragement. For meeting details, visit HLAA's national event calendar or contact **kristin@canalsidespeech.com**.

## Birthdays

Happy Birthday in October to:

5 Rebecca Sprague
10 Trudi Slocum
11 Stan Gross
15 Dan Brooks
27 Darlene Augustine-Dear
31 Gloria H. Matthews-England

### Bluetooth

*(Continued from page 4)*

battery consumption than a tiny hearing aid battery could produce. To solve this problem, Hearing Aid Manufacturers, in conjunction with Apple, developed propriety modifications to classic Bluetooth technology by creating a low-power Bluetooth system. This enabled Bluetooth to have much lower battery consumption and thus be able to work with hearing aids-it is also why many phones have a different Bluetooth connection process for hearing aids than they do for standard Bluetooth devices (like earbuds, cars, TV, watches). Over time, Bluetooth has evolved to include working with all types of phones, not just iPhones, by using a standardized low energy protocol know as LE Audio.

As frustrating as it may be, if your hearing aid occasionally disconnects from your Bluetooth signal, understand it is a complex and continually evolving technology. An occasional loss of connection does not necessarily indicate a problem with your hearing aids. In many cases, refreshing the connection will restore normal operation.




# RSVP BY OCTOBER 7th!!

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## HLAA Membership Information

Hearing Loss Association (HLAA) Rochester Chapter, Inc., a tax exempt and volunteer group, is a chapter of a national, nonprofit, nonsectarian, educational organization devoted to the welfare and interests of those who cannot hear well.

We are currently meeting in person and online via Zoom. See our website at **hearinglossrochester.org** to register for the online access.

While our primary focus is directed toward people with hearing loss, we welcome everyone to our chapter meetings whatever their hearing ability.

For more information, call

**585 266 7890**
**or see**
**hearinglossrochester.org**

## Professional Advisors

**Sue Miller, Chair**

**2025-2027:**
Pamela Kincheloe, Ph.D.
Diana Palotas
Jason A. Richards
David Scott

**2026-2028:**
Aayush Kothari
William Marshall
Matthew MacDonald, AuD.
Adam Sheppard, AuD.

**Consultants:**
Medical - Ophir Handzel, MD
Technical - Charles Johnstone
Legal - James Vazzana, Esq.

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Newsletter
Newsletter deadline: first day of the month preceding the issue month.

Bruce & Candi Nelson, Editors
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HEARING LOSS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

## *Be Part of National HLAA*

It's now easier than ever to **become a member** of HLAA's unique community of support! HLAA is the leading organization representing more than 50 million Americans with hearing loss, and empowering millions more who are at risk of developing this invisible disability.

Make a gift in any amount to help us make an impact on this growing public health crisis

**As a Member, You Will…**

- Make an impact helping millions thrive with hearing loss
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To sign up, please visit
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Office and general inquiries:1750 Tysons Blvd., Suite 1500, McLean, VA 22102

301.657.2248

inquiries@hearingloss.org

**CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP FORM**
**HLAA-ROCHESTER**
**Membership year: July 1 - June 30**

**All members receive the Rochester Chapter Newsletter!**

☐First-Time Member ☐Renewal

**Membership Type**: ☐Individual $10 ☐Family $20 ☐Corporate $50
☐Veteran $0 (Free lifetime chapter membership for veterans with hearing loss.)
Please state Branch of Service_____ *Thank you for Your Service!*

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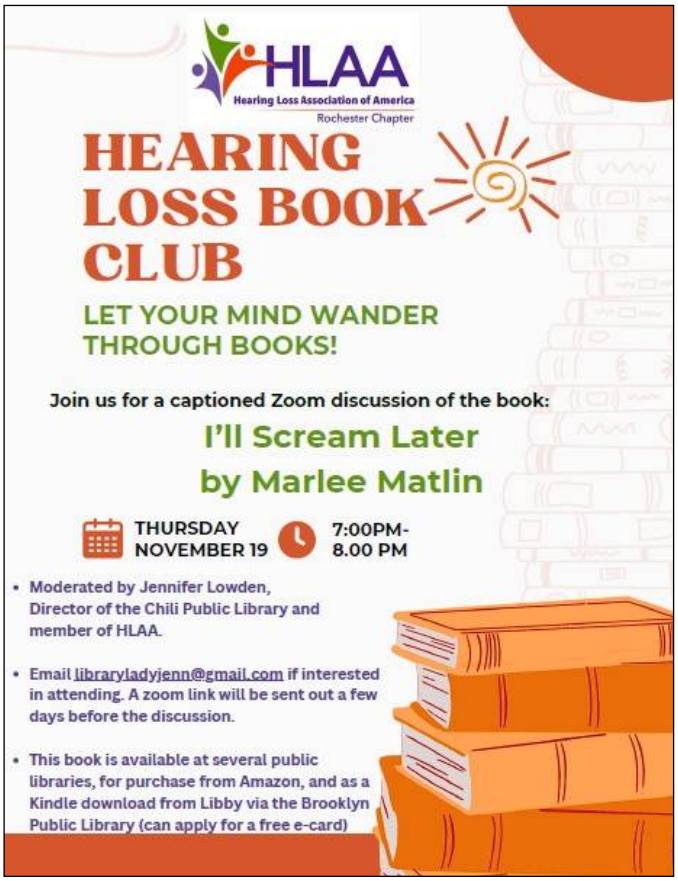
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## Our Meetings are Hearing Accessible




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, Auracast-enabled, and captioned. Our chapter meetings are also 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.*