



May - June 2020

Chicago North Shore Chapter Newsletter

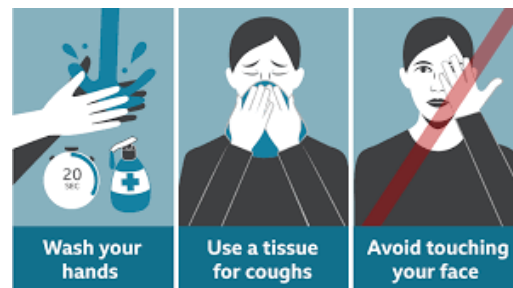
The North Shore Senior Center, NSSC, is closed and has cancelled all on-site activities until further notice. The Chapter will resume weekly support groups and monthly meetings following the NSSC's reopening.

Meeting News

HLAA Chicagoland Chapters Hold Inaugural Virtual Meeting

On Saturday, May 16, the HLAA Chicago North Shore Chapter, the Chicago Lincoln Park Chapter and The Illinois Cochlear Implant Chapter joined together for their first virtual Zoom Meeting with 44 of their members in attendance. The Meeting was hosted by the three Chicago Chapter Presidents, Elaine McCaffrey, Janet Tusk, and Deirdre Keane. Live captioning of the Meeting was provided by Jo Gayle.

The three Presidents led discussions about upcoming HLAA events: Janet discussed the **Chicago Walk4Hearing** planned for September 26 which is planned as an in-person walk, but could be changed to be a virtual Walk. Deidre discussed the National HLAA virtual meetings held on Saturdays, each with an excellent speaker



Lastly, Elaine discussed how HLAA pivoted quickly, after cancellation of the 2020 HLAA Convention in New Orleans, to have the scientist previously scheduled to appear at the Convention. The HLAA will instead present virtually their current research on “The Potential for Regenerative Medicine to Restore Hearing Loss” and the Research Symposium titled “The Latest on Tinnitus Research”. It will air on two afternoons June 18 and 19, free for everyone to watch. (Ed. See Convention News elsewhere in this letter for details).

The meeting concluded with several polling questions presented by the presidents to the audience. The attendees enjoyed the meeting and described their feeling as being connected. 100% of those attending agreed that they wanted to meet again. The three presidents agreed to discuss future meetings.

John McCaffrey

Saturday, June 27, 2:00 pm – HLAA Chicagoland Joint Chapter Meeting. You can join the Zoom meeting at 1:45 p.m. to test out your Zoom features. The meeting will officially start at 2 p.m. and end at 3 p.m.

Chicago area Chapter Presidents, Elaine McCaffrey, Janet Tusk, and Deirdre Keane will host this Zoom meeting open to all three Chapter's members and any interested parties. It will again feature live captioning by Jo Gayle.

Chicago North Shore Virtual Meeting

On July 13, the North Shore Chapter will meet, as we always do in July, to discuss the HLAA Annual Convention, this time based on the HLAA Experience, the HLAA Research Symposium on Tinnitus and more. We will also vote to accept amended Standing Rules. Captioning will be provided.



This month we are pleased to introduce and welcome a new feature, columns by Linda Bilodeau. Linda has provided the following information.

“I have a forty plus year history of hearing loss. I currently write a column for the Florida Hearing Loss Association titled *Meandering Through A Hearing World*. I’ve grappled with hearing loss since 1978. Through it all, I’ve faced periods of denial, acceptance, curiosity, trust, and hope. But more often than not, I’ve felt annoyed, angry, and frightened. I’ve encountered despair, loneliness and envy. I’ve had panic attacks. I’ve met understanding people, kind souls who helped me a great deal and others who thought I had nothing short of an invisible plague.

As a way of coming to terms with my hearing loss, I’ve decided to put my feelings about my inability down on paper. My hope is to better understand myself. Perhaps you’ll find a little something in my meanderings that will help you, too.”



Meandering Through A Hearing World

For the Love of My Phone

There I was, standing in my local supermarket, gazing into the meat case, flabbergasted. Our country had declared war on Covid-19 so I wasn’t surprised seeing people flying by with grocery carts filled to the brim with food and paper products. It

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was the kind of panicked buying spree that occurs when the national weather service declares hurricane warnings in my little town, here in Southwest Florida. Still, what surrounded me didn't have that pre-hurricane vibe. In the days before Hurricane Irma struck, the grocery store meat counter was never emptied of roasting chickens, chicken wings, thighs, and breasts.

The meat cooler was still filled with pork roasts, chops, steaks, stew meat and hamburger. Yet, I had promised my husband a chicken-thigh casserole. I pulled out my iPhone, ready to give him the bad news, but hesitated. In quiet it isn't easy hearing on the phone. Here, I was in the midst of the click-clack of grocery cart wheels, the chorus of voices from other shoppers, and a crying child, background noise, the enemy to all with hearing loss.

And so goes my love/hate relationship with my phone. Six years ago, after purchasing my first made-for-iPhone hearing aids, I was elated. After my audiologist finished pairing my aids and phone and explaining how my new system worked, I made a test call to my husband. His voice came through as clear as could be, making me believe my telephoning woes were over.

Though my iPhone has many pluses, there are drawbacks. Each morning, I have to insure that my phone and aids are connected. In order to avoid losing that connectivity, my phone and I have to be close companions. I still have issues hearing women's voices and with anyone speaking at a speed faster than superman can fly. Even with the loudest and deepest ring tone available, I miss incoming calls.

My unanswered calls end up in my voicemail box where callers are issued a warning: leaving a message will result in a delay answering you. Please email me instead. Still the brave and bold wade into murky waters, leaving their names, phone numbers, and messages for me to sort out. My Verizon's caption voicemail service has cut down on the number of times I have to listen to a message, but it isn't perfect. If someone speaks too fast or indistinguishably, I'm left untangling partial sentences.

Recently I discovered Captioned Call, LLC. The app is free from the Apple store as long as you provide a letter from a doctor or audiologist certifying you need it. Captioned Call can be used with iPhones or iPads and doesn't require the dialing of a separate phone number. The app comes highly rated, something I'm looking into.

I texted my husband from the supermarket about the no chicken dilemma. This place is crawling with people, I wrote. The shelves are emptying. He wrote back saying, get what you can. So I stocked up on hamburger and stew meat and found pasta, carrots, tomatoes, squash, onions, garlic and potatoes, food we could survive on for a while.

Later, my house filled with the aromas of freshly-made beef stew and lasagna. I'm taking in a big breath and counting my blessings. I have everything that matters most to me. My sweet man and I are happy and healthy. In my house, all is right and good. May yours be that way, too!

Linda Bilodeau



We regret to tell you the sad news that Marlin Abramson passed away May 9 after a long struggle with Parkinson's. We wish to extend our sympathies to his partner Ann Lawson, and to the rest of his family. Ann and Marlin were longtime members of the Chicago North Shore Chapter. Ann said it was a significant game changer for Marlin. He was sullen when he first came, but thrived as he bonded with people here. They were so grateful for the chapter, and we have been so lucky to have them participate in the chapter over the decades.

Convention News



The National HLAA Convention for 2020 Has Been Cancelled.

One unfortunate fallout of this cancellation is that there will be no honoring **Chapter President Elaine McCaffrey, who was scheduled to be presented with the 2020 HLAA Community Service Award.** She was nominated by Liz Hupp, Betty Buino, Bindy Bitterman, and John McCaffrey, citing her tireless efforts to organize and build up our chapter's annual *Hospital Safety for People with Hearing Loss Panel* each October.

No rest for Elaine, she has already begun contacting potential panelists for the 6th annual Hospital Safety Panel Discussion, October 12, 2020.

Future HLAA Conventions

2021: San Diego, June 24-26, Town and Country
2022: Tampa, June 23-25, JW Marriott Tampa
2023: New Orleans, June 27-July 2, New Orleans Marriott

And to soothe our convention withdrawal, HLAA has put together a virtual mini-convention set to air on June 18 and 19, 2020.

When: June 18 – June 19, 2020

Where: Online at [hearingloss.org](https://www.hearingloss.org)

Cost: Free

This online meeting will feature the HLAA Research Symposium on Tinnitus and more. Visit HLAA for further details.
https://www.hearingloss.org/event/experience-hlaa/?instance_id=890

7 Tips to Maintain Hearing Health Care Amid COVID-19

By Shari Eberts

*From **The Hearing Journal**, a proud partner with the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA).*

The world has changed a lot in the past few weeks. Physical distancing due to COVID-19 has closed restaurants, theaters, and many other "non-essential" businesses, prioritizing health care and access to food and medicines above all else. This has caused many of us to self-isolate, keeping our distance for our safety and that of others, to help flatten the curve of infections. For people with hearing loss, maintaining our hearing health and having access to working hearing aids and other communication devices are critical as we adapt to various ongoing—and often stressful—changes. Despite this challenging time, stay on top of your hearing health with these tips:

1. Take an inventory. Make sure you have plenty of hearing batteries on hand to keep your devices functioning for at least eight weeks. Replenish supplies online or ask your local pharmacy or supermarket to deliver some to your home. Many pharmacies are offering free delivery for prescription items; they may do the same for hearing aid batteries. Your audiologist may also have extras on hand they can send to you. Check out a subscription battery service for home delivery such as HearOClub.

2. Explore telehealth options. Call your audiologist about teleaudiology options, which are remote hearing care services using video conferencing technology in place of an in-person visit. Video calls are preferable to audio-only calls because they allow for lipreading. Skype, a free video calling service, provides live captions for all

calls (captioning directions here: <https://bit.ly/2UbkmTA>). While the captioning quality can vary, it will help fill in some of the gaps you may miss. Call your insurance provider about your telehealth coverage, since Medicare, for example, has recently expanded its coverage for telehealth to help seniors during this public health emergency.

3. Utilize curbside, contact-less services if available. Check for drop-off and curbside services that your audiologists may be offering. If available, observe CDC guidance on physical distancing by staying in your car while the audiologist or a team member comes to pick up your device. If the repair is quick, wait in your car until the device is returned to you. For larger repairs, schedule a time for curbside pick-up of the repair at a later date. Don't hesitate to ask the audiology clinic about their infection control strategies to make sure that devices are returned clean and ready for your use.

4. Stay as connected as possible. Speak to someone by phone or video chat each day or two to stay connected to friends and family. Speaking on the phone can be challenging for people with hearing loss, but many captioned phone options exist. Explore this list compiled by the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA): <https://bit.ly/3bk3MNJ>.

5. Experiment with a variety of communication tools. With more conversations moving to phone and video calls, and in-person chats taking place behind medical masks, you may need to use additional tools for communication. Try a speech-to-text app like Live Transcribe (only on Android), Otter, or Ava to create captions on demand. Other options like a Boogie Board or a small whiteboard work well for short messages. Paper and pen are also a good option.

6. Consider a backup hearing device. Should your hearing aids stop working, and you are unable to have them repaired, try a smartphone amplifier such as Ear Machine. This and similar apps allow you to use your smartphone and a pair of headphones to amplify sound in real-time. Consider an over-the-counter personal sound amplifier product (PSAP) or a pocket talker.

These are not hearing aids but might be able to get you through a crisis. These options will work best for those with mild to moderate hearing loss and need a little hearing enhancement in specific situations.

7. Prepare a communication kit. If you need to seek additional medical attention, call ahead first. If you are told to visit the doctor, bring your hearing aids, extra batteries, chargers and any additional communication devices you have discovered from your experimentation activities. Create signs for you to wear or be displayed in your hospital room to remind medical personnel about your hearing loss. If safe to do so, bring a friend or loved one to assist. If you are hospitalized or for any medical visits, review HLAA's [Guide for Effective Communication in Health Care](https://bit.ly/3bmgKdM) (<https://bit.ly/3bmgKdM>)

The COVID-19 pandemic is making life more challenging for everyone. Prioritize your hearing health by staying in touch with your audiologist and other hearing health professionals. With flexibility, creativity, and willingness to try new communication technology, we can protect our health without neglecting our hearing.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Shari Eberts is a hearing health advocate, and writer. She also serves on the Board of Trustees of the Hearing Loss Association of America. She has adult-onset genetic hearing loss, and hopes that by sharing her story she will help others live more peacefully with their own hearing issues.



North Shore Chapter News

Lest you think that the Chicago North Shore Chapter is just lounging around, the following report comes from Sharon King, our Advocacy chair.

This is a follow up to concerns reported in the April Chapter newsletter regarding poor performance of captioning services offered by our providers. Sharon has put together this tutorial as an aid to contacting the FCC. Please add your voice to those making the FCC aware of this issue.

Tutorial on Filing a Complaint with the FCC Regarding Telecommunications Relay Service (Captioned Telephones)

The following is a step by step tutorial on filing a complaint with the FCC regarding Telecommunications Relay Services (Captioned Telephones):

1. Click on link--
<https://consumercomplaints.fcc.gov/hc/en-us/articles/204231424-Accessibility-Complaint-Filing-Categories>.
2. On the page that opens, under the heading "File a Complaint About," *located on the upper left side of the page*, click on **Telecommunications Relay Services**.
3. The next page that opens is the "Accessibility Complaint" form. In this form fill in the blanks, including personal information. Instructions/suggestions on some specific headings are below.
4. Under **Subject**, the space allowed is limited but it is important to quickly identify your subject matter. I recommend: "Slow, inaccurate and incomplete captioning by landline non-VRS forms of TRS." Description of providers is from FCC Order DA-20-281.
5. Under **Description**, a little more space is allowed. The following is a comment example: "FCC Order DA-20-281 granted a waiver, from March 1, 2020 through May 15, 2020, to providers of non-VCR forms of TRS of the requirement that 85% of calls be answered within ten seconds, with the condition that 85% of calls be answered within 120 seconds."

6. This Order protected such providers from noncompliance with FCC requirements as the result of increased call volume arising from the COVID-19 crisis. The providers were protected but users, who have long struggled with delays and inaccuracies in captioning, were not. The delays and inaccuracies instead became even worse, rendering the service virtually useless. The need for FCC Order DA-20-281 demonstrates that many captioned phone providers are not adequately prepared to provide timely, accurate and complete captioning service and must improve. Those who use InnoCaption mobile captioning know that accurate captioning without delays can be provided, even during a crisis. The FCC is requested to act to ensure high quality IP-CTS service for all."
7. Under **Accessibility Issues**, click on the down arrow on the right side of the box and scroll down to select **Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS)**.
8. More boxes open. The information on Company Complained About is not required and can be left blank. You could include only the name of a provider without address etc. In personal data be sure to add hyphens to telephone number and answer the box on whether you are filing for someone else. Then a box appears (to show you are not a robot?) asking you to identify where some item is in a grid (for me it was a taxi). You can then click **Submit** and a brief acknowledgement will appear. A written confirmation will be sent by the means you designate, for me it was by email.

Congratulations. You have now filed a complaint with the FCC.

Sharon L. King

What To Do?

We all are finding something to accomplish during our stay-at-home periods these last few months. Here are some of the activities that our members have shared:

Liz Hupp has gathered these rocks as well as cheerful photos on her walks around her neighborhood with her husband. Here is just a sampling of her **pictographs**.



Bindy Bitterman has found more time to indulge in one of her favorite pastimes, limericks. In fact, she has delved into even more word detail as she shares some Word Study with us.

For those who must always read lips,
We've intimate relationships
With homophones*—they
Make up much of our day!
And let me tell ya—a lot are real pips!

*Homophone - words which are pronounced differently but look alike on the lips

And **Christine Rudolph**, while still busy with her animal shelter duties, lets on where she might be spending some leisure time by sharing this development.



1510 Chapel Hill Road
McHenry, IL 60050
<https://goldenagecinemas.com/>

While the Chapter doesn't usually endorse products or businesses, we hope you won't mind if we pass on this good news.

The owner/operator the McHenry Outdoor Theatre has this to say about his recent opening:

"We are planning to offer closed-captioning (when available) for our friends that are hard of hearing. It would be each Wednesday. The closed-captioning would be at the bottom of the screen while the movie plays. I get so many requests for this and I'm really considering doing it for our fellow drive-in fans that need this feature."



Please don't forget that the **Chicago North Shore Chapter** is on **AmazonSmile** and benefits from your using the link shown below.

Shop at smile.amazon.com/ch/27-3871624 and Amazon will donate to the Hearing Loss Association of America Chicago North Shore Chapter.

Editors' note: We frequently publish website links to further information related to newsletter articles.

If you have a problem with a link, please let us know and we will attempt to provide a printed copy of the reference.

Mike Wehman wehmans@comcast.net
Liz Hupp Liz@Hupp.com

Thank you to everyone who submitted articles to this newsletter. You will see more of them next month. Contributions to the newsletter are always welcome.

Mike Wehman