

HLAA Twin Cities

Hearing Loss Association of America Twin Cities Chapter **May 2010**

The next meeting is Saturday, May 15 at the Courage Center. This is the last meeting before summer break.

Where Do We Meet?

**Courage Center - 3915 Golden Valley Road
Golden Valley, MN 55422**

When: September through May

Time: 9:30 AM – Noon

3rd Saturday of each month

(No meetings - June, July and August)

Events for 2010

May 15, 2010 - Open Mic and Pot Luck and **Jerry Pouliot** will be giving a short demonstration on the CapTel 800i phone.

June 17 – 20, 2010 - Convention 2010 - at the Hilton **Milwaukee** City Center and Midwest Airlines Center. Great opportunity for those of us in the Midwest to attend a national convention!

The Mission of HLAA is to open the world of communication to people with hearing loss by providing information, education, support and advocacy.



- **HLAA TC Website**
www.hlaatc.org
- **HLAA National**
www.hearingloss.org
- **MN Contact Information**
info@hlaatc.org

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Facts on Hearing Loss in Adults

> One in every ten (36 million) Americans has hearing loss. As baby boomers reach retirement age starting in 2010, this number is expected to rapidly climb and nearly double by the year 2030.

> While the vast majority of Americans (95%) with hearing loss could be successfully treated with hearing aids, only 22% (6.35 million individuals) currently use them. Only 5% of hearing loss in adults can be improved through medical or surgical treatment.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

what?



Linda Miller

I had an opportunity to visit my parents who are now living in Mesa, Arizona. This past year they both received hearing aids. We discovered that my father was severely hard of hearing in his right ear. Now I understand the reason why, when riding in the car, I would ask him a question from the passenger side and often times he would not answer. He believes he lost most of his hearing from working as heavy equipment operator for the city of Minneapolis and possibly from serving in the military during the Korean War. Of course on my mother's side of the family, her mother was almost deaf. Her other brother also should be wearing aids. He ended up purchasing very expensive ones and returned them to the audiologist. My Aunt still complains to this day.

One habit they picked up immediately was trying to talk to one another and myself from another room or talking before getting each other's attention first. I let it go for awhile, but it started to really get on my nerves. Mom's response continually was "What?" I finally sat them down and explained a better way of communicating with one another. They received a crash course on hard of hearing etiquette. This of course worked out much better for all of us and they did thank me for it. It still amazes me that audiologists don't explain proper communication skills with new hearing aid patients. I would not have learned these skills if I had not been involved in the Hearing Loss Association. It's hard enough with the general public, but it so necessary to learn with our family members.

A reminder to all members that this month will be our last meeting till we meet again in the fall, which will be September 18, 2010. Our new president will be Carole Blowers. We will be gathering with a presentation from Jerry Pouliot from Minnesota Relay on a newer Captel phone available. We will have an Open Microphone time, so if you have questions you would like to ask the group, this is a great opportunity to do so. We will then celebrate our time together for our Potluck before we break for the summer. Hope to see you there!

Linda

Bits and Pieces.....

HLAA NATIONAL CONVENTION, MILWAUKEE

JUNE , 17 – 20, 2010

COME TO MILWAUKEE AND BE INSPIRED

Milwaukee is more than just the beer capital of the country, it is a beautiful city along the shores of Lake Michigan filled with amazing architecture, parks, museums, shopping, world-class restaurants, and of course breweries. But it's the people there – the Midwestern friendliness abounds among people whose ancestors came from Germany, Ireland, Poland and many other countries. According to one of our members, the convention is a "transforming experience," so come join us for Convention 2010 and be inspired!

We are fortunate that the convention is being held nearby in 2010. It's a great opportunity to meet people with hearing loss from all over the country and learn the latest in research, medicine, audiology, and technology.

Inspired by a true story "Sue Thomas **FB Eye**" is now available on DVD beginning in May 2010. It is the story of a young Deaf woman who lip reads very well and worked for the FBI. It is also available on Gospel Music Channel (GMC) in the Twin Cities.

John E.D.Ball, 77, founding president of the National Captioning Institute died in Vienna died on March 25, he was a native of Scotland and came to the US in the 1960 in mid career. Many in the Deaf and HOH community applaud him for his unending work in the captioning industry.

Watch Regis and Kathy Lee as they announce Heather Whitestone as the new Miss America in 1995.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pyLBF6w900Q>

Are you interested in a **job in the DC area?** Fidos For Freedom is an organization that deals with service dogs. They are looking for an executive director.

<http://www.fidosforfreedom.org/executivedirector.pdf>

Their main website: <http://www.fidosforfreedom.org/> Info. from Denise Portis

You know you are **Deaf** when....See what the **British** say to finish that statement. Visit "Ouch, It's a Disability Thing"

http://www.bbc.co.uk/ouch/features/you_know_you_re_deaf_when_part_2.shtml

Anyone interested in the new **Sony Dash Personal Internet Viewer** (miniature netbook) it can pull up things like You Tube, but cannot show captions.

Another hearing loss group called **Say What Club** is having their convention on August 4 - 8, 2010 in Denver. Events are being held at the Red Lion Hotel. For more info. <http://www.saywhatclub.com/events/con/Denvercon.html>

<http://signlanguageforbaby.com/>
Small Talk - baby sign language class, two hrs, taught by Susan Hagel, teacher, author with over 30 years experience. On teaching your baby conversational ASL. Myth: if your baby learns sign it will slow down verbal speech. Fact: just the opposite, your baby will learn to speak sooner. This class is geared towards hearing babies and families, but contact Susan if you have any questions about your baby's speech development.

Synopsis of April Meeting

Submitted by Monique Hammond
SYNOPSIS OTOTOXIC SUBSTANCES

Monique Hammond, Pharmacist and HLAA TC Past President, was the speaker at our April 17 meeting. Monique talked about all sorts of chemicals that can be harmful or poisonous to our ears. This is a vast and complex area of medicine where few structured or targeted studies have been done. Traditionally, we are most worried about medications. However, the long list of possible culprits also includes environmental agents, supplements and herbal products as well as drugs of abuse.

It is mostly agreed that a chemical is labeled as "ototoxic" if it causes damage to the *inner ear and/or to the hearing and balance nerves*. This means that hearing loss, from mild to deafness, and balance or dizziness issues are the primary ototoxic markers. So, do tinnitus, hyperacusis and auditory hallucinations also qualify? Many experts say yes. However, often authors do not specify in their reports what their exact definition for ototoxicity really is. Therefore the number of possibly harmful substances varies widely depending on the source that one consults.

Among medications, the list of suspects runs the gamut from Aspirin to chemotherapy. Monique focused on ototoxicity issues that pertain to some frequently prescribed medications as well as to products that we can buy over-the-counter. Yes, there are some known, aggressive, ear-offending drugs. However, their actions can be eased through appropriate, controlled use as well as through responsible prescribing and careful patient monitoring.

Most of all, Monique stressed that as patients we have to get into a "preventive" thinking mode. We must be mindful of the ototoxic potential of all sorts of products. It is our duty to inform all health care personnel of our already existing ear problems and have our records flagged or marked accordingly. Before prescriptions are even written, we should question the doctor or other prescriber about the possible harmful ear effects of the medications. The pharmacist is always a good source of additional information. In this electronic age, anyone who prescribes or dispenses medications should have access to the professional information databases that

hold so much more up-to-date information than a package insert. For items that do not require a prescription, we are on our own. Again, the pharmacist can help. Or might we google the product before buying?

If we suspect that a particular medicine affects our ears, we must report to the doctor/prescriber at once and ask for guidance. It is not advised to quit the medication in a "cold turkey" fashion. Many medicines are not meant to be stopped abruptly and doing so could buy us a trip to the Emergency Room. Ultimately, if no ototoxic information can be found regarding a product that is ear-unfriendly for us, we are encouraged to file an adverse medication event report with the FDA's MedWatch program at www.fda.gov/medwatch. They are most greedy to get post marketing drug information from the general public. Not all side effects show up in pre-market release testing.

Ototoxic side effects can be temporary or permanent. Not all people are affected in the same way by a particular drug. In order to keep ourselves as safe as possible, questioning and investigating should always come before medicating. Once again, an ounce of prevention is so much better than the elusive pound of cure.



This year we celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act

We've come a long way, baby!

To borrow from the advertising slogan of a cigarette in years past, I am happy to report that we as individuals with a hearing loss have truly come a long way in the past 50 years. Three points come to mind when I say that slogan in regards to hearing loss.

- 1. I am so thankful for the great changes that have happened in my lifetime.*
- 2. I am so grateful to those that helped to implement these changes.*
- 3. We need to “pay it forward”.*

Thankful: My Dad was deaf. We didn't call it deafness however. He just had a “little hearing problem”. He was born in 1913 and had a hearing loss in his early 20s. He was probably 40 or older before he got his first hearing aid as they were not available or affordable. He spent his entire life not really acknowledging a severe hearing loss. Happily, it did not stop him from enjoying a full life, but it seems strange in 2010 to hide a hearing loss.

I went to college in the late 1960s with a hearing loss. I too tried to hide my hearing as there was no captioning, no notetakers, no laptop computers, no amplification in classrooms, no cutting any slack because you had a hearing loss. Advisors would come right out and say you were better suited for something like sewing or data entry.

Today I can enjoy email, instant messaging, text telephones, telephone relay service, captioning in classrooms if I need it, wonderful hearing aids and cochlear implants to allow us to get the most from our ears, hearing aid and cochlear implant coverage at work (State of MN), assistive devices

at church and the theatre, captioned performances at the Guthrie and Mixed Blood theatre, open and closed captioned movies, both in the theatre and on DVD, and the list goes on! The public attitude towards hearing loss has changed a lot.

Gratitude: These changes did not happen “automagically”. I am so grateful to the sung and unsung heroes that made these changes possible. Granted, many of the new things that make our lives easier were not invented specifically for people with hearing loss, but I am grateful for them all the same.

So many people have contributed quietly to the better life we have now that it is impossible to list them all. There are many people who worked tirelessly to pass the ADA and other legislation that has resulted in so many improvements in our lives. Lisa and Angie and other captioners have quietly typed away, opening up the world for those who cannot participate without visual information. The Lions Club members join together to raise important funds for hearing centers, research, and hearing aids. Medical doctors, audiologists and researchers who dedicate their working lives to the goal of helping people like us hear.

Pay it forward: What can we do? Write to your congressmen and women when issues arise that would make our lives better. Ask your employer to add hearing aids to their health insurance coverage. Ask again. And again. Support your local and national organization as they advocate for you. Support each other. Thank the people and organizations that help you. We often forget to do that. Thanks Lisa and Angie! Thanks Dr. Levine, Sharon Smith, and Emily Farmer! Thanks Bernie, who took a chance and hired me! Thanks to my sibs, who supported me all the way..... OK, you know my list is long.... So is yours!

Linda Senechal



The Twins aren't the only ones to win in the new stadium.

Perhaps the most overlooked accolade among those piled on the Minnesota Twins' new ballpark is how well it caters to people with disabilities. Dominic Marinelli, a national consultant who has worked on a number of new stadiums, called Target Field "the most accessible one in the country." It sets a standard for the next ones," said Marinelli, vice president for accessibility services with New York-based United Spinal Association.

Margot Imdieke Cross, an accessibility specialist with the Minnesota State Council on Disability, said ballpark planners agreed early in the process not to settle for the bare minimum. The first step was to form the Target Field Access Advisory Committee, which included Imdieke Cross and 19 others who developed design recommendations.

Getting it right was important to the Twins because that's the team's philosophy and it cares what the public thinks, said Ed Hunter, project manager for the Minnesota Ballpark Authority.

At Target Field, every gate is accessible for people in wheelchairs.

Among other features, some that likely would go unnoticed by fans who don't need them:

- All concession counters are 8 inches lower than usual, 34 inches high, to help customers in wheelchairs and shorter people. Many include signs in Braille or large print for sight-impaired fans.

- Speaker boxes at ticket windows were placed below the agent's mouth so fans who are deaf can read their lips. Ticket windows have amplification devices that agents can use to transmit to a buyer's hearing aid.

- Fans who are hard of hearing can read the ballpark announcer's messages on captioning boards along the foul lines overlooking left and right field. Assisted listening devices to transmit ballpark audio are available for free.

Twins Fan at the April Meeting



Odd Jobs

Have you ever wondered who gets hired to provide the text on your Captel phone? Or to caption our low-budget, state-provided TV programming? Let's back up a few steps, and maybe we'll find out.

Like other members of her family, our daughter Rayah is hard of hearing, but she never let that stop her from work that requires interaction with the public. From office coordinator with a phone on each T-coil-equipped ear to actor and director of plays in New England communities near her home, she makes the most of what she hears, even if it isn't everything.

Since a layoff in early 2009, however, she has had the added challenge of finding *new* jobs every couple of months. Most recent job opportunities have turned out to be part-time and/or temporary. Better than nothing, but not enough to live on. Rayah has actually worked at seven such jobs during the last year or so.

The latest wrinkle in the job scenario is that her 14-year-old hearing aids are not only inadequate for her but one is not working at all. Connecticut, which has always been helpful to its hard of hearing citizens, is now struggling with new economic realities, and has changed its requirements for service. Rayah wondered if she would even be eligible this time around for assistance in getting new hearing aids.

Concerned about being able to stumble through job interviews with one ailing hearing aid, she seemed even more worried about its impact on her first love, theater. "I won't even be able to hear my cues on stage," she sighed.

In the end though, Connecticut's BRS (Bureau of Rehabilitation Services) came through for her, and she is on track to receive new hearing aids – soon, we hope.

Of numerous recent job possibilities, the employer that actually hired her -- a television

station – seems a little closer than others to her theatrical heart, even though its programming is not very dramatic (proceedings of the Connecticut legislature).

What is odd is the pairing of Rayah with this particular job: she is doing live television captioning. Her first program aired while I was visiting in April.

The captioning process used for this live programming is different from that which we use at our HLAATC meetings, but still requires careful and accurate listening. It is similar to the process used for Captel: the captioner listens to the proceedings and speaks them into a voice-recognition-equipped device, which creates the captions for the TV broadcast. Captioners spend time correcting their training results – and later, their on-air results, in an ongoing process to improve communication for hard of hearing and deaf viewers.

Even after weeks of corrections, the machine may spew out incomprehensible verbiage for words it has already been taught. But Rayah has been assured that after a few months it is much more accurate.

A few months? There's the catch: the work is part time and the pay is very low. If and when the job market improves, many of those who are currently captioning will want to move on to other jobs, hoping to earn a living wage. The result will be frequent turnover in a line of work where length of time on the job is probably the key to good results.

The good news is that voice recognition is happening, and will probably get better. As machines get smarter and learn faster, they may even get good enough to be effective for operators who are working only for the short term.

By then we hope Rayah will have a full time job that pays a living wage, and may herself benefit – this time as a viewer – from the progress now being made.

Vicki Martin

Facts on Hearing Aids *from www.hearingloss.org*

- The hearing aid fitting process typically consists of six stages: assessment, treatment planning, selection, verification, orientation, and validation. The widespread use of computers has made the process of fitting hearing aids more accurate and efficient.
- Over 60% of individuals with hearing loss are fit with two hearing aids (binaural). The benefits of wearing two hearing aids are enhanced ability to (a) hear better in the presence of background noise, (b) determine where sound is coming from, and (c) hear soft sounds at lower levels.
- One state-commissioned study published in 2000 has put the average cost for requiring hearing aid coverage by all insurers, non-profit health plans and health maintenance organizations (HMOs) every 3 years at \$16. This is based on a \$1,400 contribution per hearing aid (beneficiaries wanting more expensive hearing aids would pay the difference), excluding the cost of batteries and maintenance that is estimated at about \$300 per year.
- Hearing aids differ in design, type of circuitry, size, and amount of amplification, but they do have similar components that include a microphone, amplifier circuitry (to make the sound louder), a receiver (to deliver the amplified sound into the ear); and batteries to power the electronic parts.
- Approximately 30% of hearing aids in use today are equipped with a telecoil. This is an optional feature that couples directly with hearing aid compatible telephones and assistive listening devices, improving intelligibility in noisy situations, poor acoustical environments, and at long distances from the speaker.
- There are over 1,000 types and models of hearing aids to satisfy an individual's hearing loss needs.

Models of hearing aids include:

1. Completely-in-the canal (CIC) – the smallest model for mild to moderate hearing loss.
2. In-the-canal (ITC) – not as small as CIC, but slightly better power.
3. In-the-ear (ITE) – larger than ITC, enough power to benefit a wide range of hearing losses and enough room for some special circuitry.
4. Behind-the-ear (BTE) – offers special programming, special coupling ability to other devices, special circuitry, and power.
5. Body – housed in a special case that can be carried in a pocket providing the most power for the most severe hearing losses.

- Hearing aids vary in terms of the technology that is enclosed in the casing (described above). Types of hearing aids include: conventional analog hearing aids, analog programmable hearing aids, and digital processing hearing aids. Lower end technology allows limited flexibility in programming the hearing aid for the individual's hearing loss characteristics and environmental characteristics. Mid level technology allows greater flexibility in meeting individual needs and can produce a hearing aid that is fully automatic. This level of technology may include noise reduction which may make listeners more comfortable in noisy backgrounds. The highest level of technology can be completely automatic or user controlled. This level of technology provides the greatest flexibility and many custom features are available to meet the individual listener's needs.

Performances Presented with Open Captioning through July

M. Butterfly

Performed by: the Guthrie Theater.
Location: Guthrie Theater's Wurtele Thrust Stage, 818 2nd St. S., Minneapolis.

Captioning: Friday, June 4, 7:30 PM (by c2 inc.).

Tix: Reduced to \$25 for Captioning; phone: 612-377-2224, TTY 612-377-6626.

Website: www.Guthrietheater.org.

Description: Tony Award-winning and Pulitzer-nominated *M. Butterfly* traces lines of race, gender and power through love and deception.

Dollhouse

Performed by: the Guthrie Theater.
Location: Guthrie Theater's McGuire Proscenium Stage, 818 2nd St. S., Minneapolis.

Captioning: Friday, July 9, 7:30 PM.

Tix: Reduced to \$25 for Captioning; phone: 612-377-2224, TTY 612-377-6626.

Website: www.Guthrietheater.org.

Description: What looks like the perfect life is woefully incomplete, propped up by dark secrets and bitter betrayals.

Movies

Cinemas having captioning are:

Kerasotes Block E Stadium 15, AMC Eden Prairie Mall 18 Theatres, AMC Rosedale 14 Theatres, Oakdale Ultrascreen Cinemas (Marcus Theatres), and Lakes 10 Theatre offer captioned shows. See www.moviewatcher.com/index.html

Science Museum of Minnesota Omnitheater –

Films shown at the Omnitheater often offer accessible features (CC: Closed Rear View

Captioning; AD: Audio Description; or Spanish translation).

Tickets are \$8 adults (first film), \$7 senior/child, with 15% discount for each additional film on the same day. To request accommodations for exhibits, call at least 72 hours in advance: 651-221-9406. Open Monday-Wed. 9:30-5:00, Thurs.-Sat. 9:30-9:00, Sun. 12:00-5:00. Contact info: 120 Kellogg Blvd. W., St. Paul 55102, **Phone:** 651-221-9444, option 2 for film times, reservations or questions; TTY 651-221-4585; **E-mail:** info@smm.org; **Web:** Accessibility: www.smm.org/accessibility, Hours & Showtimes: www.smm.org/hours; **Tickets:** <https://www.smm.org/tickets>.

Facts on Cochlear Implants

From www.hearingloss.org

- Approximately 70,000 people worldwide have cochlear implants.
- Approximately 25,000 people in the United States have cochlear implants.
- The demand for cochlear implants is increasing annually by 20%.
- Nearly half of all cochlear implant recipients are children.
- Approximately 250 hospitals across the country perform cochlear implant procedures.
- By the time a child with hearing loss graduates from high school, as much as \$420,000 can be saved in special education costs if the child is identified and given appropriate early intervention.

April Meeting Smiles



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This month's editor is Linda Senechal

Meetings are held the 3rd Saturday of the month September through May at the Courage Center in Golden Valley, MN. We gather at 9:30 to socialize and the meeting starts at 10 AM. All meetings are real time captioned by Lisa Richardson and her staff of *Paradigm Captioning* (www.paradigmreporting.com). Please visit the chapter's web-site at www.hlaatc.org