

# HLAA TC

# March 2016



Twin Cities Chapter

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

This month:

March 19, 2016

The Esteem Hearing Implant  
Speaker: Brent Lucas

Coming Soon:

April 16, 2016

Cochlear Implant Update Panel:

Christine Pett, Med-El

Jennifer Brown, Cochlear

Julia Biedenstein, Advanced  
Bionics



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## Officers' emails

- Christine Morgan - [president@hlaatc.org](mailto:president@hlaatc.org)
- Lionel Locke - [vicepresident@hlaatc.org](mailto:vicepresident@hlaatc.org)
- Lisa Richardson - [secretary@hlaatc.org](mailto:secretary@hlaatc.org)
- Marie Saliterman - [treasurer@hlaatc.org](mailto:treasurer@hlaatc.org)

HLAA TC Website - Minnesota

[www.hlaatc.org](http://www.hlaatc.org)

HLAA TC telephone 763-447-9672

Contact Information - Minnesota

[info@hlaatc.org](mailto:info@hlaatc.org)

HLAA National - Maryland

[www.hearingloss.org](http://www.hearingloss.org)

Hearing Loss Association of America Twin Cities Chapter (HLAA TC) is held the 3rd Saturday of the month (September thru May). We gather at 9:30 to socialize, and begin our meeting at 10 AM at The Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute, 3915 Golden Valley Road, Golden Valley, MN 55442. The meeting adjourns at noon.

# President's Message



*Christine Morgan*

**March 2016**

Happy “almost” Spring!

It has been great meeting all the new people and talking to the “regulars” at the meetings this year. We try to get the word out as much as possible and thanks to our advocates (both officers and not) it is slowly working. There are so many people out there with hearing loss who don’t know where to turn or that there is help available.

I also want to mention to members and guests that even though we laugh and sometimes get a bit silly at our meetings, we take hearing loss very seriously. Even after two successful cochlear implant procedures, I continue to have experiences which hurt and frustrate. (See this month’s article on my experience at the Ordway).

It is not always easy (that’s an understatement) but we keep moving forward and advocating for ourselves and

others with hearing loss. Hopefully, with some humor and grace.

Our chapter tries to bring you a variety of up-to-date speakers, ideas, and tips. This month, we have Brent Lucas from Envoy Medical who will talk to us about Esteem, the fully implanted hearing device. Esteem is not a hearing aid or cochlear implant. And, of course, it is not a solution for everyone.

Next month, we have representatives from the 3 cochlear implant companies. They are not here to sell you on their company or on an implant. It will be a panel discussion to answer questions that you might have on implants. I would like to ask you to send me your questions (or give me a note with them on it) before the April meeting. Questions can be sent to [president@hlaatc.org](mailto:president@hlaatc.org). Having the questions ahead of time will keep the discussion focused and relevant.

We are currently putting together our list of presentations for the next year. Please do give me (or one of the other officers) your suggestions or ideas for either speakers or subjects. Some of you have done so already and that helps me search for the right speaker for the requested program ahead of time.

Thanks again for being part of this chapter. If I can help you in any way, please do not hesitate to ask.

Christine

# HLAA-TC February 20, 2016 Meeting Synopsis

BY LIONEL LOCKE, VICE-PRESIDENT



*Lionel Locke*

President Christine Morgan called the meeting to order at 10 AM. She welcomed all those in attendance and then Vice President Lionel Locke introduced our speaker Mr. Dennis Martin. A long time HLAA member, Dennis introduced online communication resources that assist people with hearing loss.

Skype and Google Hangouts are two that Dennis uses extensively. The others are online person to person communication and video communication applications with Yahoo, Messenger and Apple Face Time. These are free to the public. Those that come with a price tag are generally more effective and are designed for business applications rather than personal use.

The most universal application according to Dennis is Skype. The company has been in existence for a long time and has experience across a lot of platforms. The user is not restricted to one type of computer or cellphone. Invented by a Swiss Engineer in 2003, it can be used anywhere in the world and has built in language choices.

The second application is Google Hangouts. Invented by Google, this application has cross platform functionality. If you have Google on any of your devices, you can get hangouts quite easily. It's also free. There is a business application that has a fee structure with more functions than the free service.

The most practical use for people with hearing loss for either one of these services is downloading both voice and video capability to your computer. You can also have instant messages and therefore can communicate three different ways.

Dennis explained in detail how to join these services, how to set up an account and how to use the service. Each topic created much discussion and questions from the audience. Dennis ended his presentation by stressing that you should be working with the latest version of the software on your computer in order to obtain the best functionality of the downloaded services.

President Morgan thanked Dennis for his presentation. After the break, Vicki Martin presented the monthly ASL lesson with “good” words, including please, thank you, happy, and love.

Officer reports from Marie (the treasurer), Lionel (the Vice President) and Christine (the President) were delivered followed by general discussion and comments from the membership.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at noon.

**REMINDER:** When we have a guest speaker (or one of our own) please remember to be quiet during the presentation. With T-coils on, we probably can't hear our own voices and may not even realize how distracting it can be. Here are a few suggestions that should help if we all follow them:

- Only one person at a time should speak during the presentation and meeting
- If you would like to speak or ask something, raise your hand and wait until you get the microphone
- Hold your conversation until break time or after the meeting

**RIDES:** There are still two people who would like rides to the HLAA-TC meetings. One is in Austin MN and another is in Forest Lake MN. If you are able to provide transportation for either of these interested parties, please contact Marie at [mgellerman@comcast.net](mailto:mgellerman@comcast.net).

**LACE:** There is still one LACE program (speech training) remaining since the drawing in December. If you purchased one of the tickets for the drawing but did not win a LACE program, please contact Marie at [mgellerman@comcast.net](mailto:mgellerman@comcast.net). Your name will be entered into a drawing at the March meeting, and you will have another chance to win!

#### **Hearing Loss Support Group of Mankato announces:**

Hearing Loss Support Group  
Second Thursday of the month 5:30 – 8:00 PM  
Mayo Clinic Hospital Room 0308/0310 (enter at Main Entrance)  
Email [hlsgmankato@gmail.com](mailto:hlsgmankato@gmail.com)

The purpose is to provide a safe and supportive place for adults who are hard of hearing to learn about and discuss concerns related to hearing loss.

With special thanks to Mayo Clinic Health System Audiology

## HLAA-TC Speaker for March 19, 2016

### *“The Esteem Implantable Hearing Device”*



*Brent Lucas*

**Brent Lucas** has been with Envoy Medical since 2007, when he started at the Company as a marketing and legal intern. A licensed attorney with a passion for the medical device and hearing industries, Mr. Lucas has held various positions at Envoy Medical throughout his tenure. He is now Envoy's Chief Executive Officer and a member of its Board of Directors. In addition to his time at Envoy, Mr. Lucas serves as a consultant to other companies in the Twin Cities, and has founded a non-profit to help children gain access to hearing technologies.

#### **About the Esteem® Hearing Implant**

The Esteem® Hearing Implant is a fully implanted hearing device. The Esteem® uses the ear, not a microphone, to pick up sound. There's nothing in or on your ear and nothing stuck to the outside of your head.



The *Esteem* implantable hearing device

## NOTES FROM THE MINNESOTA AUDIOLOGY CONFERENCE

February 26, 2016

The conference this year was held at the Westin in Edina. HLAA-TC and Loop Minnesota shared a table. Ross, Monique, Lionel and I (on behalf of HLAA-TC) greeted quite a few audiologists and gave them information on our chapter. A few (I guess they did not stop by last year at Radisson Blue when we also were part of the vendor group) had not heard of HLAA or HLAA-TC.

Several audiologists took our brochures, asked questions about the group, and signed up for our newsletter. I believe Loop Minnesota also had a lot of interest. This is one of the ways we get the word out behind-the-scenes.

We also had the opportunity to talk to several of the vendors about their products and some of the new technologies. We will be reaching out to a few as speakers in our 2016-2017 season in order to keep our membership apprised of what treatments and technologies are out there now and what the future plans are.

Christine T. Morgan

## **Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (DHHS) Free DIVERSITY Trainings**

### **Beginning Sign Language**

**March 15, 9:30-11:30**

Learn basic signs & phrases, and become familiar with some of the characteristics of American Sign Language and glean an understanding of the importance of gestures, mimes and reading facial expressions and body language.

### **Mental Health Services in the Deaf Community**

**April 13, 9:30-11:30**

Learn about unique mental health needs that are often found in the Deaf Community including communication and cultural concerns. Also learn why it's so important to work with a specialized mental health interpreter.

### Registration Information

Phone: (651) 431-5940 (or use your preferred Telecommunications Relay Service)

Email: [dhhs.metro@state.mn.us](mailto:dhhs.metro@state.mn.us)

If you need a sign language interpreter, CART Services, assistive listening device (ALD) or other accommodation, you must notify DHHS at least two weeks prior to the training session

## Announcing: The U of M's Center for Applied and Translational Sensory Science (aka CATSS)

The U of M's new Center for Applied and Translational Sensory Science aims to harness the University of Minnesota's world-leading scientific expertise in sensory science to tackle the problems faced by millions of people with sensory deficits, such as low vision or hearing loss. With our ageing population, sensory deficits that cut people off from their social and physical environment will have an increasingly strong impact on individuals, on families, and on society. Our aims will be achieved by combining the forces of scientists, clinicians, and engineers from the University of Minnesota and Mayo Clinic with the strong medical devices industry already present in the metropolitan Minneapolis area.

We are housed within the College of Liberal Arts with its well-known researchers in neuroscience, perception, and sensory disorders. CATSS also partners with collaborators from Biomedical Engineering and various departments within the Academic Health Center on hearing devices, tinnitus treatment, vision devices, as well as exploratory projects in other areas such as autism. CATSS is also conducting scientific projects with area industry partners, including Starkey Laboratories, ReSound, Envoy Medical, Advanced Medical Electronics, and 3M.

Here are two examples of current projects that impact the hearing-impaired community:

*Improving Auditory Implants:* Cochlear implants are by far the world's most successful sensory neural prostheses, having restored hearing to hundreds of thousands of people around the world. Minnesota is a major cochlear-implant center. Dr. Andrew Oxenham and Dr. Hubert Lim have made significant contributions to advancing our understanding of sound and speech perception through cochlear and midbrain implants. Currently, however, the success of such implants in restoring some speech understanding in quiet settings does not extend to other advanced abilities, such as understanding speech in background noise, or perceiving pitch and music. These are some of the challenges being tackled by Oxenham's and Lim's work on the next generation of auditory implants.

*Smartphone/Hearing-Aid Interface:* Dr. Peggy Nelson (right) and her research group have been working together with engineering partners on smartphone applications for improved hearing aid experiences. They have used a new wireless technology to allow communication between ear-level hearing aids and smartphones. This connection allows for features such as changes in hearing aid gain depending on the specific listening environment and pointing of hearing aid microphones to the desired signal of interest



For more information, visit our web site: [catss.umn.edu](http://catss.umn.edu)

Contact us via email: [catss@umn.edu](mailto:catss@umn.edu) or by phone: 612-624-7846

A brief video of Dr. Nelson, Executive Director of CATSS, can be seen at  
<http://cla.umn.edu/news-events/news/join-us-brighter-u>

## Accessibility – Not Always Accessible

By Christine T. Morgan

For many years, I did not go to the theater because of my hearing loss. Since joining HLAA, I have ventured out quite a few times. Sometimes, the experience is great; sometimes not. I learned that even if you are in the front row, following the dialogue is impossible without captioning or an assistive listening device.

Some theaters have their captioning set up so that you won't get whiplash trying to watch the performance while you read the captions (i.e., Guthrie) and it is live captioning and usually more accurate. Others make it more of a challenge as the captioning is not near the stage and you need to whip your head back and forth in order to read while trying to follow the action. Some use closed captioning so you miss the adlibs and paraphrasing the actors do.

Having never been to a captioned show at the Ordway, I was excited when I saw Chorus Line advertised. Evidently, the Ordway only provides captioned shows on Thursday nights (not my favorite but....). When Lionel called to get us tickets, I was surprised to find that there is no discount for those with hearing loss (or other disabilities). Other theaters in the Twin Cities offer discounts for the person with hearing loss and one guest. The History Theatre offers 5 tickets at a discount. Our Ordway tickets were \$71 each.

We were seated in row L with the captioning on the floor of the stage in front of us. People began coming in and sitting in the first couple of rows. These were adults and it was impossible to see over their heads. Lionel offered to change seats with me but it would not have made a difference. As the lights went down and the seats quickly filled up I realized that I could not read the captioning as it was at least a foot too low. I was naïve enough to think that they would raise it up during the show.

I was frustrated by not being able to read even one full line of the captioning; only a word or two when people moved their heads. In order to get up and move out of the row to the left, I would have to interrupt at least 8 people. Going right (even though it was shorter) was impossible as I knew I could not get past the person next to me unless everyone in the row moved out. I was STUCK!

Oh well, I'll enjoy the music and dancing and leave at intermission. Guess what? No intermission! 2 hours and 10 minutes without an intermission! REALLY? So I stayed in my spot and tried to enjoy the music and dance routines. I even heard some (but not much) of the dialogue. I'm sure those of you with hearing loss can relate to the experience where everyone around you is laughing at a joke or punch line and you don't have a clue. Frustration, isolation, sadness and so forth set in.

The nice, hearing husband called the Ordway the next day. He never mentioned our positions with HLAA-TC but they apologized and gave him two free tickets to one of the upcoming performances of our choice. Will they change their captioning? Who knows? The person he talked to said they would "pass it on".

My plan is to try to set up an appointment with the person in charge of accessibility. Often those in charge of accessibility don't truly understand what we need in order to enjoy a performance. I will give it my best shot. Otherwise, I am crossing the Ordway off my list.

HLAATC member **Doug Moen** reports that he attended a mandatory safety meeting at his place of work. Safety is important, right? Three-to-four hundred people met in a huge auditorium to receive this critical information.



The sound system? A single speaker-phone on a table on the stage.

#### Restaurant review

My Dad turned 98 on February 14<sup>th</sup>. He and his wife (Warren and Carol) scheduled a romantic dinner at the rural Lake Elmo Inn for the occasion. It was snowing, and was all sparkly and pretty. Their meal was, as expected, wonderful: Fish or prime rib, wild rice, vegetables, wine, chocolate-dipped strawberries, and (on the house) champagne.

The booths are tall, there are no TVs, and no music. It is quiet, partly due to plenty of space between tables so you are not overhearing others' conversations.

Carol, who has excellent hearing, does not normally notice the acoustic conditions. She is used to my Dad not being able to hear her. This time, however, she did notice – and commented: "He could hear me!" **Happy Birthday, Dad!**

I suspect they will be going there again.



#### Texas Rainstorm

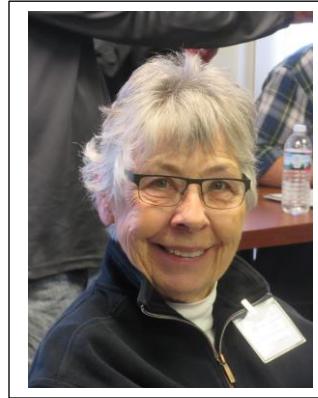
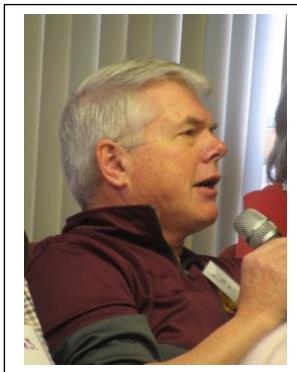


Our friend Mark likes to amuse us by sharing some of his memorable experiences. At a lecture in Texas, he was listening to a speaker when it started to rain. No, it wasn't outdoors. It was inside of a building – one with a metal roof. As it rained, the speakers' words were completely obliterated by the drumming of rain on the roof. Not even those with the most acute hearing knew what he was saying. The speaker, concentrating on his speech, remained quite unaware of the disturbance.

So how should the audience react? Everyone could continue to smile knowingly, nodding at the most emphatic gestures. As we know, this often works. But there's a catch, as Mark duly noted: what if the speaker is saying something like "You probably all think I'm pretty stupid for saying this..."

Smile and nod, right! (Now, aren't you secretly glad to know that some of the "others" have had this experience?)

## February 2016 Meeting



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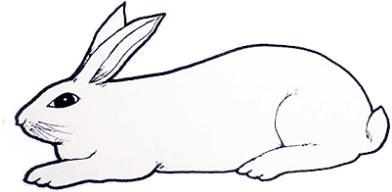
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**Our next meeting is March 19, 2016**

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**Vice President – Lionel Locke** vicepresident@hlaatc.org

**Secretary – Lisa Richardson** secretary@hlaatc.org

**Treasurer – Marie Saliterman** treasurer@hlaatc.org

**Contact Info.** - info@hlaatc.org

**Photos** – Vicki Martin

**Newsletter Editor** -

Vicki Martin, editor@hlaatc.org

**Meetings are held the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of the month September through May at the Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute 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](http://www.paradigmreporting.com)).**

Please visit the chapter's web-site at [www.hlaatc.org](http://www.hlaatc.org) or visit us on Facebook: groups/HLAA-TC.