

HLAA TC

May 2025

Twin Cities and Greater Minnesota



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

UPCOMING MEETINGS

May 17, 2025
Annual Meeting
Round Table Discussion
Budget presentation
Board elections

September 20, 2025
Meeting
(to be determined)



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www.hearingloss.org

The May Hearing Loss Association of America Twin Cities Chapter meeting (HLAA TC) will be held on May 17, 2025
See page 11 for further details

President's Message

Robyn (Byrdie) Coninx



HLAA-TC April 2025 Chapter Meeting: A Day of Connection and Celebration

What a vibrant gathering we had at the Hearing Loss Association of America Twin Cities Chapter (HLAA-TC) meeting on April 19, 2025! Held at the Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute in Golden Valley, MN, this meeting was a heartwarming blend of inspiration, community, and celebration. From a thought-provoking presentation to honoring a beloved member of our community, the day was packed with moments that left us energized and connected. Here's the scoop on what went down!

Breaking the Bubble with Jon Slock

Our featured speaker, Jon Slock, coordinator of Break the Bubble, brought a burst of energy with his talk on combating social isolation. Jon shared how his organization hosts lively events like happy hours and coffee shop meetups across the Twin Cities to help people forge new friendships. With humor and heart, he tackled the national loneliness epidemic, offering practical tips for those with hearing loss to build meaningful connections. From volunteering to joining small group chats, Jon's advice was a rallying call to get out, engage, and thrive. His message hit home: connection is a skill, and we can all practice it!

Honoring a Legend: Lisa Richardson

The meeting doubled as a joyous tribute to Lisa Richardson, our retiring CART captioner who's been a cornerstone of HLAA-TC for decades. Lisa's work—captioning everything from chapter meetings to sports events and even Minnesota's first captioned wedding in 1994—has made communication accessible for so many. Long-time members, including pioneers like Linda and Brian, shared touching stories of her impact, from late-night Canadian news captioning to her infectious "nasty elves" Facebook posts. With flowers, cards, and applause, we celebrated Lisa's legacy, knowing she'll always hold a special place in our hearts.

Looking Ahead: Board Elections and More

The meeting also set the stage for our future. Nominations for the 2025-2026 HLAA-TC board opened, with elections slated for our annual meeting on May 17, 2025. Positions like president, vice president, and members at large are up for grabs—consider stepping up to shape our chapter's path! Attendees also got the lowdown on a hearing loss fair happening April 24, 2025, at the Elmer Andersen building in St. Paul, featuring vendors and HLAA-TC info, thanks to Rich Diedrichsen's table. The day wrapped with a light lunch, lively chats, and a nod to our amazing captioner, Angie Sundell, for keeping us connected.

Missed the meeting? Want to dive deeper? Check out www.hlaatc.org for all the details and join us next time for more community, inspiration, and fun!

ANNUAL MEETING AND WALK FOR HEARING KICKOFF - MAY 17

Our Annual meeting and kickoff for the Walk for Hearing will be Saturday, May 17 at 10AM at the Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute in Golden Valley. Doors open at 9:30.

This will be our last meeting in person until September, so come join us to celebrate our time together and to make plans for the coming year. We will kick off this summer's Walk for Hearing, and you will have an opportunity to join our team. We will also spend time visiting and have a round table discussion about each of our desires and dreams for our Chapter. Some questions to think about are:

- What would you really like to get out of being a member of HLAA TC?
- What do you think should be the most important goals for our Chapter?
- What are questions you'd like to have answered about living with hearing loss?
- Are there activities you would enjoy participating in?
- What topics would you like to see addressed by our speakers?
- Do you have suggestions for any specific speakers?
- How do you see yourself involved in HLAA TC
- And so on - fill in your own topics here.

We will also be electing Board members, so please be sure and be there to cast your vote

BIOS for HLAA-TC Board Candidates

The May Chapter meeting is our annual meeting and we will be voting for Board members. All members in good standing (i.e paid) can vote at the meeting. Members can also make nominations.

In the following paragraphs the people running for the Board share a little about themselves and why they want to be on the Board.

For President: Robin Coninx (Byrdie)

'Who am I?

I wear many hats in life, advocate, mom, grandmother and dog owner 😊!

What most affects my daily life? I would have to say, my high frequency hearing loss that was always in my left ear and is now in both ears after a severe ear infection in Jan 2024.



I have been in the world of informal advocating since the birth of my daughter who is medically fragile and has received her medical care from the Mayo Clinic. Starting in 2004 I worked with families who had children with hearing loss, and after a brief break from this type of work, I returned in 2010 to continue supporting families, and in 2021 retired from MN Hands & Voices.

I am the mother of 4 adults and grandmother to 5 children. While I have a few hobbies like travel and being outdoors, my favorite way to spend my time is in spoiling my grandchildren.



Secretary: Christy Myers

I live in St. Paul and have been a member of HLAA-TC for several years and a Member at Large on the Board for the last two years. I would like to move into the position of Secretary to help the Board grow. Hearing loss is hereditary in my family and mine has gotten worse over the years to the point that I am currently considering receiving a cochlear implant. I first became involved with HLAA-TC when I was really struggling and the meetings and people I've met have been very important in my journey. As a Board member I want to continue to provide education and resources to even more people with hearing loss. Being a Board Member has been very rewarding. It is interesting and the other Board members have great ideas and passion.



Treasurer: Sharon Witt

My name is Sharon Witt. I live in Eden Prairie. My hearing loss began in my mid-50's and has gotten worse over time, especially with understanding speech. Being involved with HLAA-TC has had significant positive effects on my life. I would like to give back by being Treasurer for the Chapter.



Member at Large: Kim Fishman

I am a practicing audiologist with 30 years of experience, and my personal journey with hearing loss has deepened my commitment to this field. I first noticed my hearing difficulties in my early 30s, after I had already begun my career. Over time, my hearing loss has progressed to a severe mixed hearing loss in my right ear, likely stemming from a childhood injury when I was struck in the ear with a hockey puck during neighborhood boot hockey games. I now have a mild loss in my left ear as well. Helping others has always been a driving force for me, and I believe strongly in justice, support, and care for all. As someone who lives with hearing loss and knows the field intimately, I understand the urgent need for advocacy from those directly impacted, not just from providers. I am passionate about promoting hearing health, reducing noise exposure, ensuring business transparency, and protecting ADA rights for those with hearing challenges. I would be honored to serve on the board and work toward the changes our community deserves.

(Candidates, cont.)

There still remain two available Member at Large positions on the Board. After the vote for the above nominated officers has occurred, there will be an opportunity for Chapter Members to make nominations for those two positions. The Board can appoint candidates for these positions and the Members can ratify them at the next Chapter meeting in September. Our Chapter of HLAA-TC cannot function without members volunteering.

The Board also has two additional member at large positions which are not currently vacant. They are being served by Mark Daly and Michael Smith.

National News:



Start your engine and join us at HLAA's 40th annual convention, June 11-14, 2025, in Indianapolis—home of the famous Indy 500 race. Our yearly hearing accessible event brings together hundreds of people with hearing loss from around the U.S. to learn, discover and connect. Check out the latest technology and hear from health and industry experts during a series of empowering events designed to help you live your best life with hearing loss.

Advance registration available online at the HLAA website through May 14.



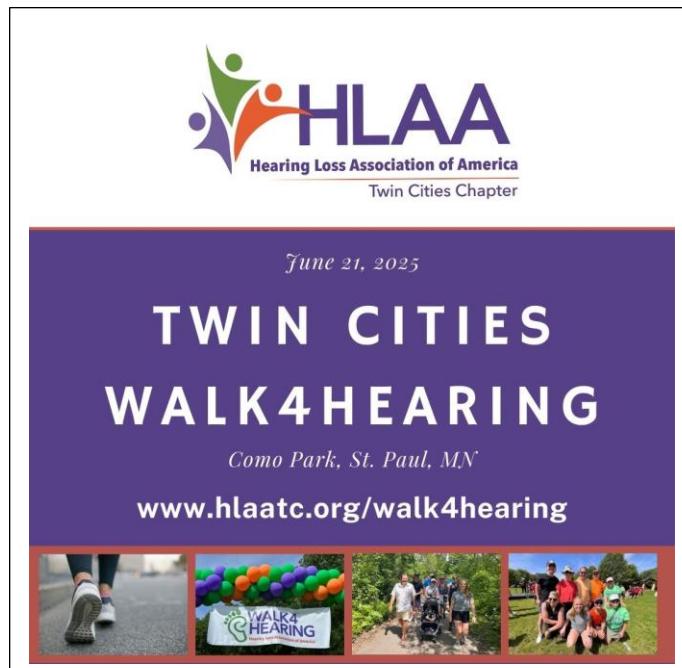
Webinar presented by HLAA May 21, 2025, 2-3 p.m. ET

The [Hearing Loss Association of America \(HLAA\)](#) is sharing a range of resources to raise awareness and address the wide-reaching impact of hearing loss in the lives of millions of people.

Hear from a panel of mental health experts and hearing health advocates about the wide-reaching effects hearing loss can have in your life, and learn strategies to thrive.

[**Register here**](#)

Join the Fun at Walk4Hearing 2025!



Mark your calendars for June 21, 2025, because the Walk4Hearing is back at Como Park, and it's going to be a blast! This annual event, organized by the National Hearing Loss Association of America, brings together families, businesses, and organizations for a day of fun and advocacy. Picture this: a scenic one-mile walk, face painting, balloons, and bouncy slides for the kids, plus exhibitors sharing the latest in hearing loss solutions. Last year's event was a hit, with hundreds joining in the festivities. Want to get involved? Visit walk4hearing.org to register, donate, or learn more. Be sure to select HLAATC when you sign up to support our local chapter—every step counts!]

To join us at the Walk4Hearing and spread the news to your family and friends, use this link to [Register](#) and designate your funds to the HLAATC team.

To donate without registering, visit the page of one of the following members of the HLAATC team. Remember to designate your donation to HLAATC. Thank you!

HLAA-TC Walk4Hearing Team Members pages:

- President Byrdie Coninx's page
- Director-At-Large Mark Daly's page
- Director-At-Large Christy Myers' page

(For more information and to see how much is being raised for the whole event, [visit the general Twin Cities Walk4Hearing page](#).)

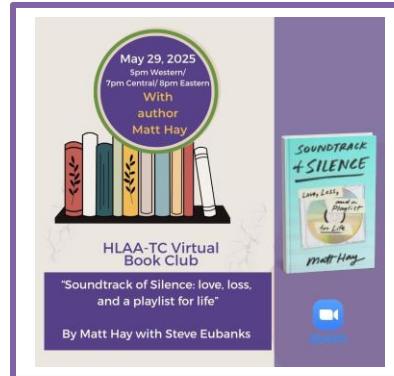
Follow HLAATC on social media to keep up to date on news about any upcoming events, meetings, conferences or fundraisers: [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [YouTube](#).

May Book Club will have the author: about the book and author
By Laura Hagemann

May book club will be meeting on the different day of Thursday, May 29th (still at our usual time of 5pm Western/ 7pm Central/ 8pm Eastern Time). We will be discussing the memoir “Soundtrack of Silence: love, loss, and a playlist for life.” By Matt Hay with Steve Eubanks. Author Matt Hay will be joining us on Zoom. All are welcome. Book clubs have captions. To receive a Zoom link for the meeting, please [REGISTER HERE](#). Please read below for a brief description of the book and information about Matt Hay.

- Synopsis: “As a child, Matt Hay didn’t know his hearing wasn’t the way everyone else processed sound—and like a lot of kids who do workarounds to fit in... But as a prospective college student who couldn’t pass the entrance requirements for West Point, Hay’s condition, generated by a tumor, was unavoidable: his hearing was going, and fast. Soundtrack of Silence was his determined compensation for his condition: a typical Midwestern kid growing up in the 1980s, whose life events were pegged to pop music, Hay planned to commit his favorite songs to memory...”
- [Neurofibromatosis Type 2](#) description on Johns Hopkins website. (The condition Hay has that affected his hearing.)
- Author website: <https://hearmatthay.com/>
- [NPR interview](#) with Matt Hay from 2017
- [Hearing Wellness Podcast Episode](#)
- Matt Hay’s TEDx Talk: [“What losing \(and regaining\) my hearing taught me about resilience”](#)
- Matt was the cover story of the September 2020 issue of HLAA’s *Hearing Life* magazine. [Read the article here.](#)
- [Article](#) by Matt Hay on Neurofibromatosis Type 2

Book Club will continue to meet (on Zoom) through the summer as we are a year round group. As always, contact Laura with questions on this and any future book clubs, social@hlaatc.org



Newborn Hearing Screenings Cancelled

Time magazine May 12, 2025

“Mere hours after birth, most newborns are tested for two things: whether they have signs of hearing loss and whether they have a range of rare conditions that could severely affect their health and their lives...One program facing cuts is the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention service (EDHI), which is run partially out of the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)...this entire branch was eliminated in the April 1 cutbacks at CDC...Newborn hearing screenings are a true public-health success story...Children’s lives can be changed dramatically by early screening and response.”

HLAATC Teams with Walker Art Center on Exhibit Focused on Hearing Loss

Art is for everyone. That is why HLAATC jumped at the opportunity to participate in a planning session designed to maximize enjoyment for anyone attending an upcoming exhibit at the Walker Art Center - which will focus on numerous issues related to hearing loss.

Renowned artist [Christine Sun Kim](#) will exhibit an expansive collection of her work at the Walker beginning in March of 2026. "Christine Sun Kim: All Day All Night" utilizes sound, language, and the complexities of communication in a wide-ranging approach to artistic expression.

HLAATC at-large board members Mark Daly and Michael Smith, along with accessibility advocates representing several other organizations, met with Kim and Walker staffers last month to discuss how to ensure the exhibit is as accessible and enjoyable for people living with various disabilities - focusing most notably on hearing loss.

"All Day All Night" will feature drawings, murals, paintings, video installations, and sculptures. "Using musical notation, infographics, and language - both in her native American Sign Language (ASL) and written English - Kim has produced a body of work that is perceptive, poetic, humorous, and political. The exhibition's title points to the energy Kim brings to her artistic practice; she is relentlessly experimental, iterative, and dedicated to sharing her lived experiences with a broad spectrum of audiences."

The exhibition will run March 27 - September 7, 2026.



Open Concept

Vicki Martin

According to the J Jones Design Co. website, “the origins of open concept floor plans may be traced to the Deaf community...an open layout allows for better visual communication and... facilitates signing,” JJones explains.

But no design websites I have found directly mention the difficulty of *hearing* in large rooms - though many offer lists of pros and cons to consider when choosing between open versus traditional layouts.

As Seniors looking for a housing arrangement that would reduce the amount of maintenance we need to do, Dennis and I have noticed the difficulty of finding a new or recent build that is *not* open concept.

It is not always easy to tell from looking at the layouts whether a plan is open or not. A lot depends on the actual dimensions of the rooms and the height of the ceiling. These things are not readily perceived when looking at diagrams on paper.

Only after spending time (a commodity that has been very hard to come by this past year) with paper models and furniture drawn to scale could I begin to visualize myself in a dwelling unit that we had by that time committed to buying.

Of all the disadvantages to “open concept” living -- and there are many* the one that worries me most is that it could increase the difficulty I would have conversing with others.

Maybe there are ways to mitigate the bouncing sounds.... furniture arrangement, rugs, drapery? And how about tapestries, tablecloths and throws? Would it be possible to lower the ceiling? I am looking for more ideas. We have about 18 months until it is ready for move-in. I’m hoping that by that time we can find some attractive noise-busting (but not budget-busting) emendations to apply.

*(often noisy, very poor sound absorption, distractions are a concern, easily appears cluttered, high-maintenance, “...can occasionally be disrupted by echoing noises or activities happening throughout the space...”)

<https://www.jjonesdesignco.com/blogs/the-great-debate-open-concept-vs-traditional-floor-plans>



Ear Trump-et needed?

President Trump is being belittled for going off on a tangent about the black vote in New York when asked about his actions and words regarding Harvard university – at least until his man on the scene cued him in with a note that it was “Harvard – not Harlem!”

Trump may have his share of gaffes on the record, but in this case, why does no one seem to ask the obvious question:

What if he just didn’t hear?

April meeting pix



Speaker Jon Slock



Membership form

To join the HLAA TC Chapter, please print and complete this form and mail to:

HLAA TC Chapter
P.O. Box 26021
Minneapolis, MN 55426

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone/TTY#: _____

Email: _____

Membership Type:

(Please Select One. All Memberships are annual and renewed on September 15th of each year)

New Membership
 Renewal

(\$25) - Individual Membership

(\$50) - Professional Membership

(\$15) - Printed Newsletter (optional - all memberships include a newsletter via email)

(\$____) - Donation

Please add up totals and mail this form along with your payment to the address listed at the top of this form.

Total Enclosed

***NOTE: National Membership is a separate membership with privileges and publications (see www.hearingloss.org).**

RECEIPT

This is acknowledgement that \$_____ has been received by HLAA-TC for _____

*from:
Name _____
Date _____*

By _____

Meeting information

The next meeting of the Hearing Loss Association of America Twin Cities Chapter (HLAA-TC) will be held on May 17, 2025.

Location: Courage Kenny, 3915 Golden Valley Road, Golden Valley, MN 55422

Registration: The meeting will be in-person only.

Meeting time: Meeting begins at 10 AM (social time at 9:30).

Accommodations: All meetings are realtime captioned by Captioners from Veritext/Paradigm (www.captioning-paradigm@veritext.com).

The meeting room is also looped for enhanced hearing directly to your hearing aids or Cochlear implant using T-coil.

HLAA TC
PO Box 26021
Minneapolis, MN 55426



First Class

Membership Form **HLAA Twin Cities Chapter**

Name.....

Address.....

City.....

State.....Zip.....

Phone.(area code).....

E-Mail.....

Newsletter via email included in all memberships

Individual \$25 (includes digital newsletter)

Professional \$50

Donation _____

Printed Newsletter (optional) \$15

**Mail to: HLAA Twin Cities Chapter
PO Box 26021
Minneapolis, MN 55426**



Welcomes You!

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