

# HLAA TC

## September 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

September 20, 2025

*Daniel Milliken*

Director, Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard  
of Hearing State Services Division:

“Ways to facilitate collaboration with  
the State”



#### Contents

✚ Upcoming Meetings	Page 1
✚ President's Message	Page 2
✚ Walk4Hearing pix	Page 3
✚ Board msg, Sept speaker	Page 4
✚ Wooferoo!	Page 5
✚ Book Club	Page 6
✚ Child Proof	Page 7
✚ Free hearing accessories	Page 9
✚ Farewell...	Page 10
✚ Membership/meeting info	Page 11

#### President's email

Robin Coninx – [president@hlaatc.org](mailto:president@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)

The next Hearing Loss Association of America Twin Cities Chapter meeting  
(HLAA TC) will be held on September 20, 2025

**See page 11 for further details**

## President's Message

*Robin Coninx*

### **Thank You for Making the 2025 Twin Cities Walk4Hearing a Resounding Success!**

On a hot and steamy June 21, 2025, 216 registered participants gathered at Como Park in Saint Paul for the 2025 HLAA Twin Cities Walk4Hearing. This vibrant event brought together families, friends, and hearing health advocates to support individuals with hearing loss through education, advocacy, and community connection.

Brandon Sawalich, President and CEO of Starkey and national co-chair of Walk4Hearing, kicked off the walk along Como Park's scenic paths. Team ReSound matched their enthusiasm, celebrating the Walk4Hearing with a strong presence. The HLAA-TC Board Team, led by board members Robin, Mark, Sharon and Christy along with HLAA-TC chapter Hal Nelson and family, also hit the trail, raising funds for the local HLAA-TC Chapter. If we missed mentioning your team, please accept our heartfelt apologies and know your contribution made a difference!

A special thank you to our sponsors, many of whom also fielded walking teams:

- CapTel
- Cochlear Americas
- Starkey
- ReSound
- Advanced Bionics
- Amplifon
- Envoy Medical
- Minnesota Commission of the Deaf, DeafBlind & Hard of Hearing
- Sorenson

At the HLAA-TC table, current board members provided resources and support for our local hard-of-hearing community. A huge thank you to the HLAA-TC Board for their tireless work organizing the event and being boots on the ground on walk day and the new HLAA W4H team, Ann Rancourt, HLAA Development and Manager and Melanie Kavka, Assistant Walk 4 Hearing Manager, who worked diligently to organize the 2025 W4H.

Funds raised will support HLAA-TC's monthly meetings (September–May), guest speaker events, and national advocacy for accessibility.

Missed the walk? Visit [hlaatc.org](https://hlaatc.org) for photos, updates, and ways to get involved in 2026. Together, we're amplifying the voice of the hearing loss community!





## **HLAATC Announces Board Changes and New Appointments**

The Hearing Loss Association of America Twin Cities Chapter (HLAATC) has undergone recent changes to its board of directors, marking both departures and new appointments.

Earlier this year, Director at Large Karla Sand resigned from her position. Additionally, as of September 2025, Christy Myer, the recently elected Secretary, has relocated out of state and is no longer serving on the board. The HLAATC extends its heartfelt gratitude to both Karla and Christy for their dedicated service and valuable contributions to the organization over the years.

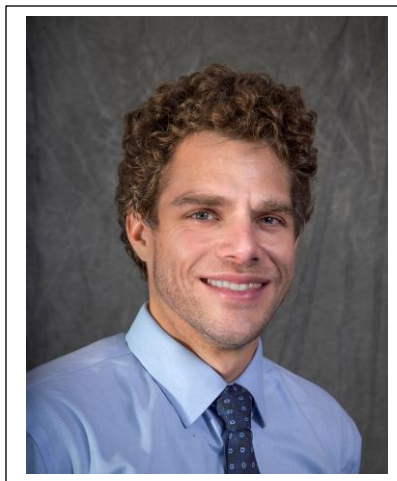
The HLAATC is pleased to welcome two new members to the board. Kim Fishman has been elected as the new Vice President, and Eve Boaheng has joined as a Director at Large. Their fresh perspectives and commitment to the organization's mission are expected to strengthen the HLAATC's efforts in supporting individuals with hearing loss.

The HLAATC remains dedicated to its mission and appreciates the contributions of all its board members, past and present, as it continues to advocate for and serve the hearing loss community in the Twin Cities.

### **September HLAA-TC meeting (in-person only)**

#### **Daniel Millikin**

Director, Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing State Services Division



#### **Topic:**

**Discussion: ways to facilitate collaboration with the state**



Wooferoo!



Michael Smith calls our attention to this family-friendly event on Saturday, September 13: Can-Do Canines invites everyone to this outdoor, family-fun event, which includes a one-mile fundraising walk, live music, a dog costume contest, an assistance dog demonstration, dog-centric vendors, and more.

*This event will be held rain or shine at Can Do Canines facility in New Hope, MN.  
9440 Science Center Dr. New Hope MN 55428 <https://candocanines.org/get-involved/woofaroo/>*

**You can participate by joining a team, donating, or just by attending the event.  
There will be a lot going on! Here are some examples:**

- **Music performed by American Bootleg**—Check out their [promo video](#)!
- **Assistance Dog Demonstrations**—See the different ways that Can Do Canines assistance dogs help their handlers.
- **Dog-centric Exhibitor Booths**—Browse and shop.
- **Tours of the Can Do Canines Campus**—Get a peek inside the facility where our assistance dogs receive final training before being matched with a person with a disability.
- **Food**—Hamburgers, hot dogs, veggie burgers, pasta salad, chips, and cookies.
- **Marketplace**—To purchase Can Do Canines merchandise.
- **Caricatures**—A caricature of you and your four-legged friend is the perfect personalized souvenir. Cost per drawing is \$15 for the first face and \$10 for each additional face. Cash or card accepted.
- **Paw-Print Paintings**—Put your dog's *pawtistic* abilities to the test with a Paw-Print Painting. Dip Fido's paws in pet-safe paint, press onto provided unique surfaces, and voilà—your very own *Pawblo Picasso*. You can create your own unique keepsake and benefit Can Do Canines. Cost dependent on surface chosen. Cash or card accepted.

### **Dog Costume Contest**

For extra fun, enter your dog in the dog costume contest, held on stage in the afternoon. Costumes can be creative, humorous or just plain cute. Winning dogs will receive some great prizes. Please make sure costumes are safe, comfortable and cool enough for a September day. Be sure to sign up at the Dog Costume Contest table next to registration by noon.

## September Book Club and August Summary *By Laura Hagemann*

September Book Club is:

**Tuesday, SEPTEMBER 23, 5 p.m. Western/ 7 p.m. Central/ 8 p.m. Eastern Time “No Excuses: Growing up Deaf and achieving my Superbowl Dreams” By Derrick Coleman with Marcus Brotherton (DB: 009856). [\[ZOOM-Register Here\]](#)**

Links and information from the August Book Club:

We welcomed Julia Metternich Olson and Colleen Julia Cline to discuss their co-authored children's book “Can She HEAR this Cat's Meow” that they had self-published and is available on Amazon.

[Amazon link to book](#)

- Julia (she goes by Julie) shared the background of her book, co-authored with her granddaughter Colleen, explaining its focus on coping with hearing loss and remaining in the hearing mainstream with support from loved ones.
- Colleen described the book as a “family” book instead of just a children's book and referenced another book like that called [“Dinosaur Divorce.”](#)
- Colleen shared how she learned to communicate with her grandmother, including using captions and a microphone, which helped her develop reading skills.
- Julia highlighted the importance of technology and advocacy in improving the lives of those with hearing loss, recounting her own journey with a cochlear implant. Both emphasized the positive aspects of their experiences and the impact of early exposure to communication aids on children with hearing loss.
- Julie was involved in the very beginning of HLAA when it was called SHHH (you can read more about the group's early beginnings [here](#), scroll down to the section that is titled “Our founder and history”)
- Julie is a member of the HLAA-Wisconsin (Fox Valley) Chapter which you can find more about [here](#)
- Julie and Colleen talked about Noise induced Hearing Loss (as Julie was concerned when Colleen joined a band). Our chapter, HLAA-TC had a hybrid conference (both in person and online) in 2022 about Noise-induced Hearing Loss. You can read (a lot of) information from the conference by going to this [webpage](#)

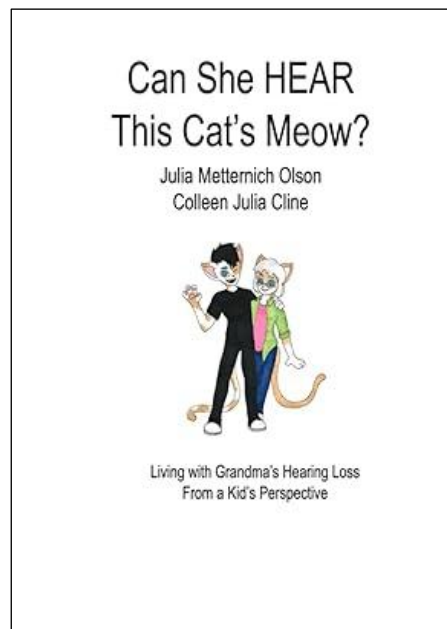
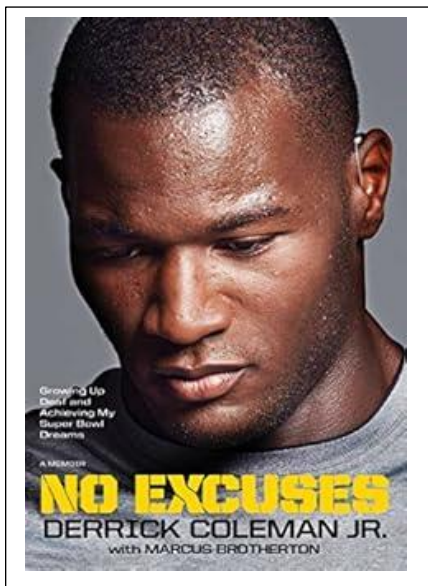
We also talked about a young adult novel “Hurt Go Happy” by Ginny Rorby.

- This novel was added to our August reading to give us more to read but otherwise it was unrelated to the other August selection.
- A young adult novel first published in 2006.

(book club, cont.)

- Inspired by the true story of a Chimpanzee raised like a child and taught sign language (Lucy Temerlin) ([Radiolab piece on Lucy, circa 2010](#)); ([This American Life episode, 2010](#))
- Author's [website](#)
- Our group had a mixed reaction to the book so I recommend checking out some reader reviews since this book is pretty well regarded ([GoodReads](#))
- If we liked reading a young adult book I do have quite a few we can choose from in the future.

Thank you again to our authors Julia (Julie) Metternich Olson and Colleen Julia Cline for joining us! Remember that all are welcome to book club and it is captioned (if other accommodations are needed, please contact: Laura Hagemann: [social@hlaatc.org](mailto:social@hlaatc.org))



“New PET-related research may increase the importance of viewing tinnitus as a neurobiological condition with evolving brain changes, rather than a purely auditory or psychological issue...the study could accelerate the development of more targeted treatments—and bring us closer to understanding the underlying brain mechanisms that sustain this often-debilitating condition.”

<https://www.hearingtracker.com/news/study-finds-tinnitus-linked-to-synaptic-changes-in-the-brain>

## Child Proof!

by Vicki Martin



If you have hearing aids, you may be dealing with the new federally-mandated hearing aid battery packages.

Yes, they are child-proof.

They are also senior-proof.

Video and text for how to open them shows someone using household scissors and cutting all the way from the edge to the center, removing a plastic wedge containing one battery. It looks easy.

It's not.

After experimenting with various tools, I found that a rugged garden shears can get the job done. Or maybe a side-cutter, if you have access to shop tools.

Be very careful. It takes a great deal of pressure to make a dent in the plastic, so you may be injured if something slips. It also takes a long time, so don't do this if you are in an important meeting. Come to think of it, you probably won't be carrying a heavy-duty scissors around with you anyway.

Which raises the question : How do you do this if you are not at home when your battery dies, and don't have access to these tools?

*You* figure it out. Meanwhile, here are the instructions for liberating your batteries, and a link showing you how "easy" it is meant to be:

*"Decide which battery you'll be removing from the packaging and cut into the packaging around it, into the two "bubbles" on either side. After cutting into the "**bubbles**," peel the cardboard backing away from the packaging and remove the hearing aid battery. Easy as that!"*

<https://duncanhearing.com/patient-resources/how-to-open-new-hearing-aid-battery-packaging/>

You can read additional articles on this new packaging here:

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/billschiffmiller/2025/06/19/what-3500-americans-reveal-about-hearing-aid-battery-packaging/>

<https://www.change.org/p/stop-impossible-hearing-aid-battery-packaging>



## FREE cochlear implant accessories

New Cochlear Americas CI accessories – free to any Cochlear Nucleus 7 user:

Swim -- and hear, too!



### Cochlear Nucleus 7 accessories:

Aqua kit for swimming with CI processor

2 tethers to clip processor to clothing

1 microphone cover

All new, never used

Free to any N7 user

Contact: Vicki Martin at [gimme88@aol.com](mailto:gimme88@aol.com)

“Hearing loss can strain the brain. The extra effort when the brain has to toil harder to interpret sound is known as increased cognitive load. It can divert needed resources from memory and thinking. In one study, researchers found a **35% higher** risk of dementia, a form of cognitive decline, in those with hearing loss and a 16% increased risk for every 10 decibels of worsened hearing.”

<https://www.hearingofamerica.com/blog/hearing-loss-brain-strain-connection/>

## Farewell to Christy!



Christy Myers is saying goodbye to Minnesota.

Christy became HLAA-TC director-at-large in June of 2021, continuing in that position until she was elected secretary in June 2025.

After more than four productive years on the board of HLAA-TC, she is now stepping down from that position in order to move to Washington State.

We all wish you well with your move, and beyond, Christy! Your ideas, effort, and support have been greatly appreciated.

We will miss you!

“Hearing loss does not always come from aging or noise exposure. Sometimes, the culprit is an underlying disease. Whether the damage is sudden or gradual, understanding the connection between health conditions and hearing loss can help you protect your ears.”

Disease #1: Otosclerosis

Disease #2: Ménière’s Disease

Disease #3: Diabetes

Disease #4: Autoimmune Inner Ear Disease (AIED)

Disease #5: Acoustic Neuroma

Disease #6: Viral and Bacterial Infections

- Otitis Media (Middle Ear Infection): Often causes temporary conductive loss
- Meningitis: Can destroy inner ear structures
- Measles and Mumps: Cause nerve damage in children
- Cytomegalovirus (CMV): Common cause of congenital hearing loss
- Ramsay Hunt Syndrome: Reactivated shingles virus damages facial and auditory nerves
- COVID-19, Epstein-Barr Virus, and Zika: Linked to inflammation and inner ear damage

<https://americanhearing.us/6-diseases-that-cause-hearing-loss/>

## 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](http://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 September 20, 2025.

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

**Registration:** (TBD)

**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](mailto: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**



Welcomes You!

**President - Robin Coninx** [president@hlaatc.org](mailto:president@hlaatc.org)  
Vice President - Kim Fishman [vicepresident@hlaatc.org](mailto:vicepresident@hlaatc.org)  
Secretary - [secretary@hlaatc.org](mailto:secretary@hlaatc.org)  
Treasurer – Sharon Witt [treasurer@hlaatc.org](mailto:treasurer@hlaatc.org)

### **Directors at Large:**

**Mark Daly**  
**Michael Smith**  
**Eve Boaheng**

**Contact Info. -** [info@hlaatc.org](mailto:info@hlaatc.org)

**Social Media** - Laura Hagemann [social@hlaatc.org](mailto:social@hlaatc.org)

**Newsletter Photographers:** Mark Daly, Dennis Martin

**Newsletter Editor:** Vicki Martin [editor@hlaatc.org](mailto:editor@hlaatc.org)