Getting the Best From Your Hearing Aids and Cochlear Implants
By Cynthia Stewart, HLAA-WA Board Secretary

Hearing assistive technology has come a long way. Improvements in the technology and availability of hearing assistive systems and devices in entertainment venues, meeting rooms, many other locations, and even in our own homes, enable people with hearing loss to overcome challenging acoustics.

But even the best systems and devices aren’t useful if they can’t connect with a person’s hearing aids or cochlear implants (CIs).

Hearing aid and CI microphones capture ambient sounds and speech. But for connecting to hearing loops or to other hearing assistive systems, or to phones, tablets and other devices, hearing aids and CIs rely on 1) a telecoil (a coil of wire found inside many hearing aids and

cont. on page 8

How Hearing Loops Can Help You Hear Sound and Understand Speech at Home
By Lou Touchette, HLAA member

Solving problems with technical solutions has always been in my blood—I’m a retired Boeing Quality Assurance Inspector. Having been hard of hearing and wearing hearing aids since the mid 70’s, I became interested in the potential benefits of hearing loops through my involvement with SHHH (now HLAA), starting in 1993.

My wife, Linda, always wanted the TV at one volume, while I needed it at another. Or, she would want to read in silence while I wanted to watch TV. I did research and realized that induction (hearing) loops might solve both of our problems.

I bought a loop amplifier, followed the instructions and installed the wire around the ceiling in my living room. I then connected the wire to the amplifier and connected the amplifier to the output sound jack of the TV with a

cont. on page 4

Providing Clear Feedback to Venues Gets Good Results
By Maridee Garvey, HLAA Member

For people with hearing loss, technological improvements in hearing aids and CIs have resulted in greatly improved hearing and understanding. But in some situations, hearing aids and CIs aren’t enough. We often can’t hear, or can’t understand, speech and sound broadcast in large rooms over traditional loudspeakers.

Assistive listening systems—hearing loops, FM and infrared systems—together with good microphone usage can make a big difference when hearing aids or CIs aren’t enough to enable us to understand speech or appreciate music. HLAA’s website page on Hearing Assistive Technology (HAT) summarizes: “HAT can dramatically improve the lives of people with hearing loss. Assistive
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Early registration for the 2019 HLAA convention starts on December 1.

Seen and Heard

NWAF Economic Opportunity Award

HLAA-WA is excited to have been awarded the Northwest Access Fund’s Economic Opportunity Award for 2018. The award will be presented to HLAA-WA at NWAF’s 2018 Awards Dinner on November 15 in Seattle.

The Economic Opportunity Award recognizes HLAA-WA’s long-standing and tenacious support for coverage of hearing aids for adults under Washington State’s Medicaid plan. Coverage of hearing aids for adults was dropped in 2011 due to the State’s fiscal problems after the 2007-8 financial crisis.

During the 2018 legislative session, after several years of advocacy by HLAA-WA and other organizations, the State Legislature restored coverage and appropriated the corresponding funding. Coverage will be available for adults eligible for Medicaid as of January 1, 2019.

HLAA-WA’s Legislative Liaison Diana Thompson, Board Secretary Cynthia Stewart and Director of Advocacy Cheri Perazzoli led efforts to contact state legislators, testify to the relevant legislative committees and place letters to the editor in publications across the state, contributing extensively to the Legislature’s favorable decision and funding. Numerous HLAA members added their voices and efforts to the advocacy campaign.

NWAF is a non-profit organization that provides funding and financial coaching to people with disabilities. Through its loan and matched savings programs, NWAF enables people with disabilities to purchase assistive technology, including hearing aids and assistive listening equipment.

The financial coaching program at NWAF provides free, one-on-one counseling regarding credit, banking, budgeting, disability benefits and assistive technology needs.

More information about NWAF and about the Awards Dinner is at www.nwaccessfund.org/.

2018 Senior Lobby Conference

HLAA-WA was well represented at the October 11, 2018 Fall Conference sponsored by the Washington Senior Citizens’ Foundation.

HLAA-WA Board members Cheri Perazzoli, Karen Utter and Warren Weissman attended, along with Legislative Liaison Diana Thompson. HLAA-WA provided information about hearing loss to conference participants through an outreach table.

The Conference, held in Tacoma at the Hotel Murano, covered topics including health care, long-term care, independent living, guardianship and the State budget.

Speakers included executives from several State government agencies and departments, State legislators and representatives of advocacy organizations, non-profit service providers and community groups.

The Senior Citizens’ Foundation is a key partner for HLAA-WA in advocating for the needs of people with hearing loss.

Look for the international symbol of access for hearing loss...

...or for this symbol, which indicates that a hearing loop system is installed.
Local HLAA Chapters and Support Groups
Information, Education, Advocacy, and Support

Meeting times may change. Visitors, friends, family members and healthcare professionals are always welcome at any of our meetings. Please note that some of the groups do not meet during July and August. We suggest sending an e-mail to be sure the group is meeting when you plan to visit. See www.hearingloss-wa.org for more information.

RENTON — 2nd Friday 12:30 pm
Renton Senior Activity Center,
211 Burnett Ave. N., Renton
Hearing assistance: amplification, FM system, induction (hearing) loop.
Glenda: philiofam@gmail.com or 253-631-2345 (evenings)

SOUTH SOUND COCHLEAR IMPLANT SUPPORT GROUP —
2nd Saturday, 10:00 am
Meets Jan, Mar, May, Jul, Sep, Nov
TACID, 6315 S. 19th St. Tacoma
Hearing assistance: amplification, FM system, CART (real-time captioning).
Christine: Christine@cs-dhhrs.com or 253-256-4690

WHATCOM CO. — 3rd Saturday 9:30 am
Christ the Servant Lutheran Church,
2600 Lakeway Dr., Bellingham
Hearing assistance: amplification, FM, and TypeWell (real-time captioning).
Mike: 360-734-0469 or spikesweeney@comcast.net
Website: www.hearingloss-whatcom.org

Looking for a chapter?
Please contact us if you are interested in attending a meeting or if you’d like to start a chapter in your area: info@hearingloss-wa.org

Get News and Information from HLAA-WA:
Our E-news e-mails, delivered twice per month to your inbox, contain information and resources for people with hearing loss. By subscribing to “E-News from HLAA-WA,” you will be informed about news related to HLAA and to hearing loss, and you will be aware of hearing accessible events in our area.

Subscribe to the HLAA-WA E-News (it’s free) and other HLAA-WA announcements here.

Share This Newsletter
Please share this newsletter after reading it.

Doctors’ offices, dentists’ offices, hospitals and many other public places you visit may be appropriate locations for you to “recycle” this newsletter.

Many thanks!

Online Resources to Keep Informed
Bookmark the HLAA-WA website, a fantastic resource for people with hearing loss, at hearingloss-wa.org

Information about HLAA’s national Get in the Hearing Loop campaign is available at https://www.hearingloss.org/programs-events/get-hearing-loop/.

Find out which Washington State venues are looped for your entertainment, and get news and information about the Let’s Loop Seattle campaign at www.loopseattle.org.

Get information and registration information about the HLAA national convention at https://www.hearingloss.org/programs-events/convention/.

Like the HLAA Facebook page at www.facebook.com/HearingLossAssociation.

Summaries of HLAA’s Hearing Life magazine are available online at https://www.hearingloss.org/news-media/hearing-life/.

patch cord. I turned on the telecoils in my hearing aids and could hear the TV broadcast directly in my hearing aids from anywhere in the room. I could also adjust the volume on the amplifier to suit myself. Linda was able to mute or adjust the sound of the TV speakers to suit herself, without affecting my loop volume. We were both very happy with this new arrangement.

After retiring from Boeing in 2000, we relocated to southern Arizona. Since there was no HLAA chapter in Tucson, we joined a local group called the Adult Loss of Hearing Association (ALOHA). I became part of the Board of Directors and a leader of the “Let’s Loop Tucson” movement.

I concentrated on community outreach, giving presentations and demonstrations about hearing loops and explaining how loops can help people hear better in their homes, churches and in many other venues with challenging acoustics. I also taught home loop installation classes and promoted the importance of telecoils in hearing aids, without which hearing loops are much less valuable.

Over our 17 years in Southern Arizona we saw rapid growth in the number of looped places. In the Tucson area, I am aware of over 100 looped churches, libraries, hearing aid provider offices, University of Arizona classrooms, public service offices, social centers and more. Meanwhile, word had spread quickly that I knew how to install “home loops” as a hobby, so for many years I helped others install and enjoy loops in their own homes. To date, I’ve helped loop more than 350 homes.

Having recently moved back to Washington and now living in Mount Vernon, Linda and I joined the Whatcom County HLAA Chapter and we’re hoping to continue helping people like myself (I now have two cochlear implants) to live and hear better. I have also joined the Cochlear Americas CI support group that meets in Burlington.

My emphasis will be on promoting hearing loops and advising people on installations. Cheri Perazzoli, HLAA-WA’s Director of Advocacy and the founder of the Let’s Loop Seattle campaign, is guiding the creation of a Let’s Loop campaign in the city of Anacortes and in Whatcom County. We hope to educate local hearing professionals about the benefits of hearing loops, and the importance of explaining to consumers the benefits of hearing loops and
of telecoils in their hearing aids and CIs. We will urge hearing professionals to install loops in their offices, enabling clients to test and understand the benefits of loops.

Hearing health professionals are the first line of education for consumers with hearing loss. They need to educate patients about the importance of telecoils. Once patients are fitted with new hearing aids or CIs, and once their telecoils are activated, patients should be able to take a seat in a “calibrated” looped office and watch a TV to hear with the telecoil(s) on. If the sound is too weak or too strong, the provider can tweak the sound. All before leaving the office, thus eliminating the need for a follow-up visit. Once the telecoil has been properly adjusted, the patient should be able to go into any venue that has a “calibrated” loop and hear just as well as in the provider’s office.

Our Anacortes/Whatcom County “Loop Team” plans to participate in health fairs in Whatcom and Skagit counties, where we will have temporary loops installed. We will make available loop receivers with telecoils, so people who don’t yet have hearing aids or CIs can put on headphones and hear the same high-quality sound that those of us with telecoils are hearing. This same high-quality sound would also be heard through their eventual hearing aids or CIs.

We will also make ourselves available to provide loop demonstrations at other venues upon request. To give you an idea of what’s involved in hearing loop installations in the home, here is a link to my loop installation overview on the Let’s Loop Seattle website: https://letsloopseattle.wordpress.com/2017/09/13/a-loop-at-home-yes-and-heres-how/.


I have big goals in mind for hearing loops in Skagit and Whatcom counties. But when we moved into our new home in Mount Vernon last month, my first goal was to loop our home. I installed a loop in my den and another in the ceiling of our family room. The ceiling loop connects both to the TV in our living room and to the one in the family room, so I can hear whichever TV I am watching.

If you are located in northwest Washington State and are interested in advice about a loop for a home or for your local civic venue, place of worship or entertainment venue, please contact the Whatcom County HLAA chapter (see contact info on page 3 of this newsletter).
listening systems and devices bridge the gap between you and the sound source by eliminating the effects of distance, background noise, and reverberation. They can bypass challenging acoustics—sending sound directly to users’ ears.”

Through my own research, and by using tools like the list of events with assistive listening systems in HLAA-WA’s e-news, I am aware of venues and events where technology will bridge the gap between my hearing aids and the venue’s sound system.

Often, I leave the event happy that I was able to understand, and thankful that an assistive listening system was available. But when an assistive listening system doesn’t work properly, I end up even more frustrated than if there was no system at all.

In June, I eagerly attended a play at Seattle’s Taproot Theatre, greatly anticipating being able to hear and understand due to the hearing loop at the theatre. I was very disappointed that I couldn’t understand anything, as the loop didn’t work.

During intermission, I went to the ticket office and inquired whether the loop was turned on. I was assured it would be checked, but I noted no difference during the rest of the production. I asked if there had been any complaints in the past and was assured there had not been.

When I arrived home, I emailed fellow HLAA members, who quickly responded with their own disappointing experiences attending the Taproot. I discovered that there have been numerous complaints in the past two years. It also had been suggested to the theatre that they have Spencer Norby (a loop installer well known to HLAA-WA) assess the functioning of the system, but this suggestion apparently had not been implemented.

I wrote to the Taproot shortly thereafter about my disappointment with the hearing loop. I asked them to refund my tickets for
Feedback and Results  cont. from page 6

two upcoming plays if the loop was not going to be improved. I said it would be senseless, and boring, for me to sit through performances where I wouldn’t understand what was being said.

I was very happy to get a response from Karen Lund, the Associate Artistic Director of the Taproot. Although she is not typically involved in customer service issues, she had spoken with other staff and realized that the poor functioning of the hearing loop was a long-standing issue.

The staff I had spoken to on the date of the performance was not informed about the problem, but Karen assured me that the theatre was taking steps (with help from Spencer Norby and HLAA-WA’s Cheri Perazzoli) to try to improve the situation.

Karen Lund was very good about keeping me informed by email over the subsequent weeks. They asked Spencer Norby to assess the hearing loop and tell them how to improve the system. Based on Spencer’s initial assessment, they had an electrician look into how the theatre’s electrical system might be interfering with the loop.

Both experts concluded that numerous steps could be taken to improve the system, but at substantial cost to the theatre. It’s unfortunate that the original loop installer did not do a better job, and that the significant investment made by the Taproot just two years ago to install a hearing loop wasn’t successful.

The latest information from the Taproot is that they are going ahead with the improvements to the hearing loop and are waiting for Spencer Norby to be able to fit the job into his schedule. That’s fantastic, and I am very grateful to the Taproot and to Karen Lund for being so responsive.

A key takeaway for me is that it’s worth politely taking action when an assistive listening system doesn’t do the job. The venue won’t know if the system isn’t working unless they get feedback—and the feedback needs to be from people with hearing loss.

If we patronize venues that have assistive listening systems, and we thank them for what’s working and tell them about what’s not working, life will be better for all of us that have hearing loss.

I am hopeful that before long I will be able to resume attending performances at the Taproot, and will be able to hear AND understand what is being said on stage!
Telecoils and Bluetooth

CIs), and 2) Bluetooth (short-range radio wave) capability. If the world around you can’t connect to your hearing aids or CIs via a telecoil or Bluetooth, you are missing out on all that wonderful technology.

This is why a high priority for HLAA-WA during the 2019 session of the Washington State Legislature is passing legislation requiring audiologists and hearing aid dispensers to inform their customer about telecoils and Bluetooth and to clearly explain the advantages of each technology. Many users of hearing aids and CIs don’t adequately understand how telecoils and Bluetooth can dramatically enhance the effectiveness of their hearing devices, and how to use those technologies.

It’s as if a person purchased a smartphone and then walked out of the store not knowing that the phone enables them to text and send email, in addition to talking on the phone.

Telecoils and Me

Decades ago, I was told that my new hearing aids had a “telephone switch.” Flipping this small switch was supposed to allow me to talk on a regular telephone using my hearing aids. Well, it never worked. I couldn’t get the telephone receiver in the right position to connect with the hearing aid. It was so frustrating that I continued taking my hearing aids off and talked on an amplified phone. That continued through several more sets of hearing aids.

Then came cell phones, and I was introduced to “Bluetooth” technology. I wore a device around my neck (a “streamer”), paired it to my cell phone and my hearing aids, and what a miracle! I could actually use the phone. Still had the “telephone switch,” but no use for it.

Throughout the years, I saw the blue universal hearing sign in many places, but thought it was for people with hearing loss but no hearing aids. They could get a hearing assistive device. It wasn’t for me—I had hearing aids.

Never mind that I always had to sit in the front row at events and still couldn’t understand if the speaker’s back was to me. I didn’t know hearing assistive technology existed for people with hearing aids, and that it could connect to the telecoils (those old “telephone switches”) in my hearing aids. I didn’t know that a hearing assistive device would allow me to reduce the volume and add clarity to the sound. I never dreamed of the quality and clarity of hearing and understanding that could be achieved...
Telecoils and Bluetooth  

Several years ago, I met Cheri Perazzoli, HLAA-WA Director of Advocacy and founder of the Let’s Loop Seattle campaign, and was introduced to HLAA. I found out how much technology was available to help me hear and understand. Wow! It was life-changing.

I discovered that there are great uses for that old “telephone switch” in my hearing aids and that hearing assistive systems are incredibly helpful for people with hearing aids. I had never been told by my audiologists, not a one, about how to use the telecoil in my hearing aid. I actually cried the first time I experienced sound through a hearing loop. My audiologists have been wonderful in every other way, but I never learned any of this from them.

Recently, I had the opportunity to attend a meeting of hearing aid users in a retirement facility near my home. Most of them didn’t know about telecoils or Bluetooth, what the difference is, or how to use them. I’m not the only one who didn’t get the information.

Proposed State Legislation

That’s why I have become so dedicated to passing legislation that will require all persons who dispense hearing aids to tell their clients/patients about telecoils, Bluetooth, and what they are respectively used for. How can we ever have equitable hearing access if we don’t know about the tools that are available to us?

Last year, Representative Laurie Dolan, 22nd Washington State Legislative District, sponsored a bill (HB 2856) that, if adopted, would require any person who engages in fitting and dispensing hearing instruments to provide a sales receipt documenting that the purchaser has been informed of the benefits of telecoils and how to use them; and of the availability and benefits of Bluetooth technology.

Appropriate language would simply be added to the receipt a hearing aid buyer already must receive from their hearing professional.

A New Experience

...
Telecoils and Bluetooth cont. from page 9

The bill was introduced too late in the 60-day 2018 session to be heard in committee and voted on. But we expect it will be reintroduced in similar form for the longer 2019 regular session. I am working with Representative Dolan and other legislators to improve this legislation for its reintroduction.

Throughout the 2019 session, I will again be calling for HLAA-WA members to assist in getting this important legislation passed. Your help will give others who haven’t previously been informed of their hearing options a much better chance to optimize their hearing opportunities.

I will ask you to contact your legislators to tell them about your hearing challenges and successes in using technology, and to ask them to vote for this bill.

Together, we can help people with hearing loss overcome hearing challenges and improve their lives.

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Why Both Telecoils and Bluetooth Should Be Offered to All Hearing Aid and CI Consumers

Telecoils and Bluetooth both serve important but very different purposes in the lives of people with hearing loss.

- **Telecoils provide a one-to-many solution**: delivering the audio signal from an Assistive Listening System simultaneously to every person with an activated, telecoil-enabled hearing device within the venue.

- **Bluetooth technology provides a one-to-one solution**: delivering enhanced audio streaming from personal technology devices to individuals with Bluetooth-enabled hearing devices.

Consumer advocates recommend hearing aid and CI consumers be informed about and have the benefits of both telecoils and Bluetooth demonstrated to them by their audiologist or hearing instrument dispenser.

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HLAA-WA Holds Annual Meeting and Elects New Leaders and Trustees

HLAA-WA held its 2018 annual meeting on the morning of October 27 at the North Bellevue Community Center. After a potluck luncheon, the HLAA-WA Board of Trustees meeting was held in the afternoon at the same location.

Linda Henry, a member of the Puyallup Area Aging in Community Committee, and Irene Stewart, Communications Manager, City of Seattle Aging & Disability Services, were the guest speakers at the Annual Meeting. They described what their respective cities are doing about creating Age-Friendly communities. Puyallup was the first city to be designated in Washington State as an Age-Friendly city, and Seattle was next.

At the Annual Meeting, new HLAA-WA Board members Kate Jantz-Koprivnik, of Olympia, and Larry Wonnacott, of Bellingham, were installed. Warren Weissman, a current Board member and Board President for the past two years, was reelected to the Board.

Current HLAA-WA Board members Don Gischer and Devin Myers, who are retiring from the Board, were thanked for their long service to HLAA-WA and presented with certificates of appreciation.

Penny Allen, a past President of the HLAA-WA Board, past editor of the Sound Waves newsletter, and until recently the leader of the Tacoma HLAA Chapter, was recognized at the meeting for her long service to HLAA.

Penny and her husband John, HLAA-WA’s equipment manager, have long been leaders of the effort to improve the lives of people with hearing loss in Washington State. Penny also is a Telecommunication Equipment Distribution program trainer for the Washington State Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

New officers of the HLAA-WA Board of Trustees for 2019 also were elected on October 27. The new officers, and members of the Executive Committee of the Board, are:

- President—Cynthia Stewart
- Vice President—Jayesh Unadkat
- Treasurer—Bill Collison
- Secretary—Warren Weissman
- Cheri Perazzoli remains Director of Advocacy for the organization, and a member of the Executive Committee.
2018 HLAA-WA Board of Trustees

We are an extension of HLAA. In an effort to make hearing loss an issue of concern within our state, we promote the HLAA philosophy of self-help, while specifically addressing the issues of awareness, education, access and employment among people who are hard of hearing.

Executive Committee 2018

President: Warren Weissman, Seattle
Vice President: Jayesh Unadkat, Sammamish
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Director of Advocacy: Cheri Perazzoli, Redmond (Trustee, national HLAA Board of Trustees)

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Webmaster: Jayesh Unadkat, Sammamish
Advisory Member: Dr. Kelly Tremblay, Seattle, (Professor, University of Washington and Trustee, national HLAA Board of Trustees)

Sound Waves is a quarterly publication of the Hearing Loss Association of America, Washington State Association (HLAA-WA), 4820 156th PL, SW Edmonds, WA 98026-4846.

Newsletters are published and distributed in September, December, March, and June. They can also be read online free of cost, allowing for live linking to email addresses and online resources, or can also be downloaded free, from http://hearingloss-wa.org/sound-waves-newsletter.

We welcome articles, letters, and notices of coming events. We may abbreviate submissions due to space constraints. Any content may be reprinted or disseminated, as long as the author or this publication is credited. We encourage health and service professionals to make copies available to their clients. Submission deadlines are April 1, July 1, October 1 and February 1.

Opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of HLAA-WA or HLAA. Mention of goods or services does not mean endorsement; nor does exclusion suggest disapproval.

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Mission Statement:
To open the world of communication to people with hearing loss
by providing information, education, support and advocacy.

SAVE THE DATE FOR HLAA2019 CONVENTION

HLAA2019 Convention EARLY registration opens on December 1.
The Convention will be held in Rochester, NY.

June 20-23
Hyatt Regency Rochester
Rochester Riverside Convention Center
Rochester, NY

Register early for the greatest registration discounts! Review the packages to
determine the right one for you.

Register online, and see all the details at
https://www.hearingloss.org/programs-events/convention/

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