Learning to Like the Microphone  
By Kimberly Parker, HLAA-WA Board Trustee

Have you ever noticed how people seem afraid to use a microphone at public events? Some even flatly refuse to use one, proclaiming they have a loud voice and don’t need one. Then there are those who DO use the microphone but hold it too far away, or those who don’t keep it in front of their mouths, so it doesn’t help.

Captioning Progress at ACT  
By Cheri Perazzoli, HLAA-WA Director of Advocacy

A Contemporary Theatre (ACT) in Seattle has introduced a new form of assistance for people with hearing loss. Starting earlier this year, with its production of “Tribes,” ACT has implemented the Figaro MobiTxt® closed captioning system.

Without captions, many people—with and without hearing loss—struggle to understand dialogue during live theater. Rapid speech, accents, and background sounds may make comprehension difficult.

Captions can improve comprehension of live theater, but they often leave a lot to be desired. The typical captioning screen is placed away from the stage, so reading the captions means constantly looking back and forth between the captions and stage. Captioning screens often are too small, and the captions move fast when the production involves a lot of dialogue. Reading the captions may mean sitting in a location.

Hearing Loss Presentation at the 2017 Care Transitions Conference  
By Janet Primomo, R.N., Ph.D. and HLAA member

HLAA Board Chair Dr. Margaret Wallhagen, R.N., Ph.D., and HLAA Board member Dr. Kelly Tremblay, Au.D., Ph.D. (of the University of Washington) presented on “Age-Related Hearing Loss: Innovated Changes in Practice and Policy” at the May 10, 2017, Care Transitions conference organized by Seattle-King County Aging & Disabilities Services. Health and social services professionals and advocates gathered and learned how to empower patients and families to manage their health.

“Communication is essential to our very being, especially during healthcare transitions such as hospitalizations, nursing home care, and hospice services,” said Dr. Tremblay. She provided valuable information.

Looking for an HLAA Meeting?

Information, help and support from people with hearing loss are just a meeting away! See pg. 4.

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Lessons About Starting a Support Group
By Judi Carr, HLAA-WA Board Trustee

I started a support group for people with hearing loss in 2015 at Arrowhead Gardens, the retirement community where I live in West Seattle. Mieke Tazelaar wrote about the support group in the Winter 2015 issue of Sound Waves.

I had high hopes for the hearing loss support group. Our retirement community of almost 600 people, most of them over 65, includes many people who, like me, have difficulty hearing. I was certain that the support group would be a welcome addition to the programs at Arrowhead, and it has been. But I have also learned a great deal about the difficulties associated with organizing and then maintaining a monthly support meeting.

The initial meetings were better attended, with 12 to 15 participants. I put posters in all the elevators and listed the monthly group in the community activity calendar. I regularly found interesting speakers who provided information and shared experiences related to hearing loss. I was able to get captioning for the meetings at no cost by recruiting students who were learning CART (communication access real-time translation) and wanted to practice in a realistic environment. I also served fresh chocolate chip cookies!

Two years later, with the support group on a summer break (when many residents and potential speakers are away or otherwise engaged), it seems like a good time to reflect on what has worked and what hasn’t. A core group of six to eight people regularly attends meetings, and all of them, as well as less frequent attendees, have benefited from participating in the group.

But I am disappointed that the participation gradually declined and remains stagnant. I call 20 or more past attendees every month, and continue to advertise the group, talking it up whenever I get a chance. People don’t have to drive to attend meetings, and our facilities are comfortable and quiet (and I continue to serve cookies). Yet participation in the meetings is disappointing.

The Positives:

- Two attendees became national members of HLAA, in addition to participating in the group.
- Two of the attendees were motivated to obtain new hearing aids and are hearing better.
- I provided a donated pocket talker personal amplification device to a resident, allowing her to hear and understand better in many situations.
- The severe hearing loss of another attendee has been a source of frustration for many of her friends, but she initially shrugged off using the pocket talker I offered her. Just recently, I was thrilled to see her she had obtained her own pocket talker. Now she thanks me profusely for suggesting she try one and plans to use it at all the meetings she attends.
- Several men that attended a talk by a U.S. Department of Veterans

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Support Group cont. from page 2

Affairs (VA) audiologist learned that there was more help for them at the VA than they knew.

• Having student CART providers helped everyone understand, and was great training for the students.

Of course, there are challenges to overcome:

• The student CART providers graduated and I haven’t yet found new learners that need a place to practice.

• Two people that tried hearing aids either returned them or wear them seldom, because they are too loud or not comfortable.

• The support group has a lot of competition. There are many, many activities here for residents. I recently counted nearly 50 in one week. (Maybe my attendance isn’t that bad, after all.)

Come Fall, I plan to restart the Support Group meetings at Arrowhead Gardens. Maybe I’ll think up a new name, and I’ll find new ways to advertise the meetings, but my mission will be the same. I’ll still be trying to reach residents that don’t hear well and will let them know they are not alone. We’ll learn new things about living well by better understanding our hearing loss. We’ll learn how to use technology and communication strategies to overcome the challenges of hearing loss.

I know some HLAA groups often spend their meeting sharing personal experiences. I’ll be implementing that approach as well, avoiding the need to always have outside speakers for this small group. This will give attendees an opportunity to get to know each other better by sharing their experiences in a comfortable setting.

I’m proud of HLAA and what it stands for. It’s helped me take responsibility for my hearing loss, to learn how to live well even though I wear a hearing aid and a cochlear implant.

The friends I have met through HLAA will remain with me always. I feel that now it’s my turn to teach others how to communicate and live better with their hearing loss. Isn’t that what we learn to do as members of HLAA?

Like the Mic cont. from page 1

DRW is a non-profit organization designated in 1977 by Washington State Governor Dixy Lee Ray as Washington’s protection and advocacy entity for people with disabilities.

The three-minute video was conceived to teach the public the importance of using microphones properly wherever people engage in communication: business meetings, churches, community events or anywhere else people gather.

HLAA-WA Board members Devin Myers, Kimberly Parker and Jayesh Unadkat volunteered to appear in the video, as did University of Washington student Evelyn Burnett. Mike James, the former Seattle newsman and broadcaster, volunteered to narrate the video.

It was a great experience for all, being on the set of a professional video shoot, complete with a director, producer and make-up artist. We were excited to be able to bring a valuable public service announcement to thousands, hopefully millions, of viewers.

Devin Myers commented on his surprise that the eight-hour day of shooting film would ultimately result in a three-minute video. He said, "It took a lot of work and it was cool to see how things work behind the scenes."

The basic message of the video is: If inclusiveness is the goal, then we must learn how to use the microphone properly and consistently, so that everybody may participate, all the time, everywhere, and as a matter of course.

Using and passing the microphone should become part of our culture. People need not be intimidated by microphones. When they understand that the purpose is to maximize communication for everyone—hard of hearing and hearing alike—they are more willing to use the microphone. All the volunteers agreed that it is an important message to share and felt it was a fun and rewarding day of advocacy work! "Like the Mic" made its debut during the Awards Ceremony at the national HLAA convention in Salt Lake City on June 23, 2017. Convention attendees from all over the country applauded the video.

The video is available for free to the public on YouTube. The video also is available on the HLAA-WA and Let’s Loop Washington websites.

Together we can make a HUGE difference!

Please share the “Like the Mic” video with your friends, family and community leaders so that they may learn how imperative it is for everyone to use the microphone so that ALL may hear.
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)

SEATTLE—2nd Tuesday 6:45 pm
Aljoya Conference Room, 450 NE 100th St., Seattle
Hearing assistance: amplification, induction loop, CART (real-time captioning).
Karen: 206-817-3213 or SeattleHLA@gmail.com

TACOMA—2nd Saturday 10:00 am
(alternates with CI Support Group)
HLAA CHAPTER meets in Sept, Nov, Dec, Feb, Apr and Jun.
TACID, 6315 S. 19th St., Tacoma
Hearing assistance: amplification, FM system, CART (real-time captioning).
Jerry: 253-686-1816 or Penny: pennyallen14@gmail.com

SOUTH SOUND COCHLEAR IMPLANT SUPPORT GROUP—
2nd Saturday, 10:00 am
(alternates with Tacoma Chapter)
Meets Oct, Jan, Mar, May, Jul.
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).
Charlene: 360-738-3756 or charmackenzie@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.


Online Resources to Keep Informed
Bookmark the HLAA-WA website at hearingloss-wa.org for resources and information.

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

Find out which venues are looped for your entertainment at www.loopseattle.org.

Hearing Loss Magazine is available online at www.hearingloss.org/membership/hearing-loss-magazine/current-issue.

Get HLAA’s monthly electronic newsletter at www.hearingloss.org/content/e-news-sign.

Many thanks!
**Seen and Heard**

Former HLAA-WA Board President David Pearson passed away on April 23, 2017. David was a Board member from the inception of the Washington State Association of SHHH, and State SHHH Board President for 2001-2003. He is remembered for his contributions to HLAA-WA and as a long-term member of the Everett Chapter, where he also was President. A Celebration of Life gathering of family and friends was held in Arlington on Sunday, May 7th, and was attended by HLAA members and friends from his former chapter, including HLAA-WA Immediate Past President Karen Utter.

HLAA-WA continues to pursue restoring coverage of hearing aids for adults under Washington State’s Medicaid plan. Hearing aids are covered for people under the age of 21, but coverage for adults was discontinued in 2011 due to budget constraints.

The State Senate unanimously passed a bill this year calling for coverage to be restored, and the Senate included corresponding funding in its proposed State budget. However, although a similar bill passed the House Health Care & Wellness Committee, it was not voted on by the full House. Coverage of hearing aids for adults now is subject to the complex budget negotiations occurring in Olympia.

HLAA-WA recently asked HLAA members in Washington State to urge their legislators to support funding for coverage of hearing aids. Many members wrote to their legislators, and HLAA-WA remains hopeful that the final State budget will include funding for hearing aid coverage for adults under Medicaid.

HLAA-WA Board member Sandra Bunning reports that she and fellow HLAA-WA Board members Kimberly Parker and Glenda Philio staffed an HLAA table at the Auburn Library Assistive Technology Resource Fair on April 29, 2017. They demonstrated assistive listening devices and provided information about hearing loss.

Sandra says people who stopped at the table reported a variety of hearing experiences and had lots of questions. Many were pleasantly surprised that HLAA didn’t sell things. Sandra said, “The HLAA group was able to help people find answers and resources for their hearing loss, or for that of friends and family. She added, “We got the point across that we were there to help, fulfilling the mission of HLAA to provide information and education, as well as support.”
ACT Captioning  cont. from page 1

that is less desirable for viewing the action onstage. Theater venues often offer only a limited number of captioned performances. In ACT’s venues, particularly in the Allen Theatre (a “theater in the round”), effective captioning is particularly challenging.

The MobiTxt® system consists of individual tablet devices to which captions are transmitted wirelessly. The devices attach to a flexible arm which slides onto the armrest of the user’s seat, permitting the user to locate the device at the optimal eye level (at ACT, the flexible arms are available in the Allen Theatre but are still on order for the Falls Theatre. In the Falls Theatre, the user must hold the device for now).

The MobiTxt® system is a significant improvement. Patrons no longer have to struggle to keep up with the captions while also focusing on what is happening onstage. It’s a lot like the effective captioning devices available at many movie theaters—you borrow a device, position it to your liking, and can then follow the performance and the captions quite comfortably.

Jeremy Rupprecht, ACT’s Audience Services Manager, said “In the past, when we had a captioned show, our patrons would have to sit in a specific section and choose between looking up at the captions hanging from the grid or looking down at what was happening on stage.” He added, “It was a frustrating experience for our patrons, and it made it practically impossible for those who needed captioning to enjoy our shows.”

Rupprecht explained that they’d been looking for a solution for years. Once they found a device with a screen that limits light which could be distracting to neighboring patrons, and that has a flexible, detachable arm, “everything started falling into place.”

Patrons can use one of ACT’s 50 MobiTxt® devices from any seat for shows every Tuesday and Friday night and for every Thursday and Saturday matinee. Reserve a device in advance to have it waiting for you at your seat.

Printed instructions and a quick tutorial are available, though the devices require almost no management and the captions advance in sync with the pace of the show. No outside devices are allowed due to glare and sound concerns.

The text for the captions is pre-programmed by ACT staff before the show goes into previews. Each slide is then

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Do you have difficulty hearing over the phone?

Experience clarity and confidence on every call with Captioned Telephone Service. A captioned telephone works like any other telephone with one important addition: it displays every word the other person says throughout the conversation. When the person you are calling answers, everything that he or she says is displayed on the screen of the captioned telephone.

Captioned Telephones are available through the Telecommunication Equipment Distribution (TED) program. To apply for a captioned telephone, visit www.Washington Relay.com.

To learn more about this no-cost service, contact Washington Relay!

Call 800.974.1548 (Voice/TTY)
WARelay@HamiltonRelay.com

*The captioning service is provided at no cost. Equipment and standard long distance charges may apply.

ACT Captioning cont. from page 6

cued by an operator during each show to get the timing right for live performances.

I have had the opportunity to test the MobiTxt® system in both ACT venues. Other HLAA members have also used the system, and on June 10 a group of nine HLAA members, friends and family attended a performance of “Murder for Two.”

There were a few technology glitches with the devices at first. However, the MobiTxt® devices significantly helped my comprehension, and most other HLAA members reported good experiences. Since wireless transmission can suffer interference, occasional freezing of the captions is the major complaint I have heard. Several people commented on the effort made by Jeremy Rupprecht to repeatedly check if devices were working properly after people took their seats.

HLAA-WA President Warren Weissman attended the final performance of “Tribes,” by which time ACT staff had gained significant experience optimizing the devices. He said, “This was a great experience. I could really follow the fast-moving dialogue and understood almost everything.” He added, “Compared to prior experiences with captions for live theater, the MobiTxt® devices were a real revelation.”

The staff at ACT have listened closely to their audience and incorporated their suggestions. For example, ACT installed a program so that the MobiTxt® system opens right away when the tablet is turned on. “The goal is to make it as useful and as easy to use as possible,” said Rupprecht.

I hope the MobiTxt® devices will bring many people with hearing loss back to the world of live theater. “Theater is an art form that can exist only with a community, and it is important to ACT to include everyone in that community,” said Rupprecht.

He added, “We have patrons who have been with us since the beginning, people who have supported us and helped build ACT into what it is today, and who have had to stop attending shows because they can no longer hear what is happening on stage. The devices make our community accessible to them again and open our doors to people who have never had the chance to experience the magic of live theatre.”

For a list of captioned shows and a demonstration video, visit http://www.acttheatre.org/Tickets/figaro.
Care Transitions  cont. from page 1

about the biology and demographics of hearing loss, noting that one in three people over 65 has age-related hearing loss and that age-related hearing loss is the third most common chronic condition among older adults. Dr. Tremblay described the consequences of hearing loss, including social isolation, loss of independence, risk of falls, cognitive decline and depression, and noted that navigating the healthcare system often is difficult. Hearing loss can make it even more challenging.

Dr. Tremblay engaged participants in an exercise to help us understand how difficult it can be to discriminate speech. She covered her mouth so speechreading was not possible and said the words “cheek, chief, cheap and cheat.” She then asked the audience what words they heard.

Some participants responded that they heard each of the four words. However, as someone with hearing loss, I thought Dr. Tremblay was repeating the same word four times. She went on to explain that if an individual confuses words during medical testing for dementia and other cognitive disorders, the problem might be hearing loss rather than a cognitive disorder. Unfortunately, testing for hearing loss does not routinely occur before cognitive testing.

After absorbing Dr. Tremblay’s presentation, the conclusion for me was that it’s time that all healthcare providers ask a simple screening question of all older adults: “Do you have difficulty hearing?” If an individual (or family member) responds “yes,” hearing should be tested.

A valuable suggestion from Dr. Tremblay was that residential and health care facilities should make greater use of personal sound amplification devices such as pocket talkers. In some circumstances, such as end of life, it’s unlikely that an individual would obtain a hearing aid. If facilities had pocket talkers and taught staff, patients, and families to use them, communication might be enhanced. As a nurse, I can imagine how this would improve quality of life. Patients could more easily communicate with staff about their pain or other symptoms, and families might be better able to talk with their loved ones.

Dr. Wallhagen discussed the complexities and limitations of hearing healthcare policy. She is a geriatric nurse practitioner, researcher and faculty member at the University of

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California-San Francisco. (Dr. Wallhagen received the 2017 University of Washington School of Nursing Distinguished Researcher Award the evening after her presentation.)

She noted that barriers to hearing healthcare include lack of reimbursement for hearing devices, how and where hearing services are offered, and the high cost of hearing aids. She commented that most healthcare providers do not ask about or screen patients for hearing loss, and residential facilities for older adults often overlook hearing loss and problems associated with it. “Individuals should be encouraged to ask their primary care provider to refer them for hearing evaluations,” she said.

Dr. Wallhagen recommended two recent reports about health care policy related to hearing loss:


Thanks to the Washington State Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the meeting rooms at the conference were looped. CART captioning also was provided. Kimberly Parker, Cheri Perazzoli and Cynthia Stewart of HLAA-WA staffed a table, where they provided information about hearing loss and HLAA to conference participants. They also explained the value and functioning of hearing assistive devices.

For me, another conference highlight was observing Kimberly Parker demonstrate how to use pocket talker personal amplifiers with conference participants. This one-on-one education engaged care providers, raised awareness about hearing loss, and provided them with tangible ways to improve communication in care settings.

One final lesson from the Care Transitions conference: All of us can be advocates. We can share information about hearing loss with our family, friends, neighbors, co-workers and others we encounter through the organizations of which we are a part.
Many Thanks to our GiveBIG Donors for 2017!

Our donors made GiveBIG 2017 a big success for HLAA-WA. Many thanks to all of you! HLAA-WA opens the world of communication to people with hearing loss through information, education, advocacy, and support. We are an all-volunteer organization and your donations allow us to continue our work by helping pay for printing costs, website maintenance, registration at events and so much more. On behalf of HLAA-WA, my sincerest thanks for your much-needed support.

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On behalf of HLAA-WA, our sincerest thanks for your much-needed support.

Warren Weissman, President

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13th ANNUAL HLAA-WA FAMILY PICNIC
Saturday, July 22nd ~ 10:30am to 6:00pm ~ Eat at 12:30pm
Lake Boren Park, Newcastle, WA

Bring your family and friends and meet some new faces along with old friends. The park features walking paths, children’s play area, picnic shelters and a fishing dock. Adjacent to our covered eating area are restrooms, two tennis courts, a basketball court, a sand volleyball court, and an expanded parking lot.

- We’ll provide hot dogs/sausages, condiments, bottled water, ice, paper plates, cups, napkins and utensils.
- Please bring a potluck dish to share, by last name: A-P bring a salad or side, Q-Z bring dessert.
- Water and coffee will be available. Alcohol is not allowed in this park.
- Please also bring folding chairs for comfortable visiting and let us know if you can supply a folding table.

Driving Directions: 13058 SE 4th Way in Newcastle (off Coal Creek Parkway, between Factoria and Renton).
Traveling South on I-405, after the I-90 interchange take Exit 10, Coal Creek Parkway SE. Go about 4 miles. There is a small lake on your right. Turn RIGHT onto SE 84th Way (stop light) at a sign that says “Lake Boren Park.”

Traveling North on I-405, take Exit 5. Turn RIGHT onto Hwy 900 (NE Park Dr., which becomes Sunset Blvd.) Go about 3 miles, then turn LEFT at light onto Duvall Ave. NE, which becomes Coal Creek Pkwy SE. Go about 1 mile and turn LEFT onto SE 84th Way (stop light).

The Park entrance is on the RIGHT shortly after turning into SE 84th Way. Follow it into the park, near the gray restroom building, and park there (the only building and parking lot in the park). Behind the building is our shelter.

Thank you to the Renton HLAA Chapter
Information or questions: Glenda Philio
philiofam@gmail.com ~ 253-631-2345

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