Berlin Conference: Future Loops
By Cheri Perazzoli, HLAA-WA Director of Advocacy

In her speech during the opening ceremony of the “Future Loops” conference in Berlin, Germany, October 6-7, 2017, Dr. Ruth Warick, President of the International Federation of Hard of Hearing People (IFHOH), painted a vision of inclusion and global, universal hearing access.

She underscored the need for a world in which people with hearing loss can fully participate because universal hearing access is the norm—it’s built into the very structure of society.

Dr. Warick called for an international collaboration between the hearing technology industry, hearing loss advocacy organizations and policy makers to implement the infrastructure that would

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IFHOH President Ruth Warick and Vice President Avi Blau

Medicaid Coverage of Hearing Aids for Adults: A Step Closer
By Diana Thompson, HLAA-WA Legislative Liaison

On December 14, 2017, people with hearing loss in Washington State received a holiday present. We learned that the 2018 supplemental State budget proposed by Governor Jay Inslee includes funding to “restore hearing aid benefits for Medicaid-eligible adults.”

The Governor’s recommendation doesn’t guarantee that hearing aids for adults will be covered under Medicaid—the 2018 supplemental budget will be negotiated and modified by both houses of the State Legislature. But his endorsement greatly increases the chances.

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Seeking an HLAA Meeting?
See pg. 4 for information, help and support from people with hearing loss.

HLAA-WA and Washington’s Alzheimer’s Plan
By Diana Thompson, HLAA-WA Legislative Liaison

Due to the growing personal and financial burden of Alzheimer’s Disease on the State and its residents, Washington’s State Legislature passed a bill in 2014 directing the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to develop a State Alzheimer’s plan. DSHS presented the “Washington State Plan to Address Alzheimer’s Disease and Other Dementias” in January 2016, and its implementation was subsequently ordered by the Governor. To implement the Plan’s recommendations, a Dementia Action Collaborative (DAC) was created in 2016.

Since 2014, HLAA-WA has sought to provide education on the relationship between hearing loss and dementia. We have sought to ensure that hearing loss is thoroughly considered in the development of plans and action steps for management of dementia in Washington State.

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HLAA-WA Legislative Liaison
Diana Thompson
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This year’s Convention is in Minneapolis, MN June 21-24.

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

...or for this symbol, which indicates that a hearing loop system is installed.

HLAA-WA Advocacy—A Call to Action
By Cheri Perazzoli, HLAA-WA Director of Advocacy

HLAA opens the world of communication to people with hearing loss by providing information, education, support and advocacy. How does HLAA-WA advocate to open the world of communication for people with hearing loss in Washington State?

Our Board of Trustees has defined three key advocacy objectives:

- Making hearing health care affordable for all;
- Promoting ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliance in communication;
- Emphasizing site-specific, user-friendly, assistive listening systems (particularly hearing loop solutions) and promoting the use of captions.

We’ve implemented many steps to achieve these objectives, including partnerships with other organizations. Our work is enhanced tremendously by the support of the Washington State Senior Lobby, the Northwest Universal Design Council, Disabilities Rights Washington (DRW), AARP and others.

Making hearing health care affordable for all. During recent Washington State legislative sessions, our focus has been on supporting legislation restoring coverage of hearing aids for adults under the State’s Medicaid program. That coverage was dropped in 2011 as a budget reduction during the recession, and has not been restored.

HLAA-WA also pushes for changes in federal government programs, such as Medicare, which should provide comprehensive hearing health care.

Last year, HLAA-WA also supported Senate Bill 5177 by testifying at legislative hearings and contacting legislators. The bill, which was signed into law, requires education about hearing loss in the basic training for long-term care workers. People with hearing loss will benefit greatly when their professional caregivers are trained to identify and address hearing loss, and learn how best to communicate with patients and clients that have hearing loss.

Promoting ADA compliance for communications. The ADA was passed 27 years ago, but much ADA compliance work is still needed to meet the needs of people with hearing loss. HLAA-WA has been aggressive in promoting hearing assistive systems in civic and entertainment venues and at public meetings. We thoroughly explain the benefits of assistive listening systems (FM, infrared and hearing loop systems), we advocate for telecoils to be installed in every hearing aid, and we promote patronage of venues where hearing assistive systems exist.

Among our efforts this past year was a partnership with DRW, which produced the “Like the Mic” video, a public service announcement. The video (see the story in the Summer 2017 issue of Sound Waves) reminds everyone that effective communication begins with properly using microphones—basic amplification is insufficient at events where there are participants with hearing loss. Most of the video’s actors are HLAA members.

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Emphasizing site-specific, user-friendly, assistive listening systems (particularly hearing loops) and promoting the use of captions. Built-in solutions are much easier for everyone than solutions that require initiation and implementation each time access is needed. If assistive listening is not enough, captions are a necessary solution.

The primary focus for HLAA-WA in this regard has been Let’s Loop Washington, part of HLAA’s national “Get in the Hearing Loop” initiative, which promotes hearing loops in all public spaces. With hearing loops, hearing aids need only be switched to telecoil mode—there is no need to obtain and return hearing assistive devices, or to try and figure out how to operate the devices. See https://loopseattle.org/loops-in-seattle-3/ for a list of looped venues in Washington State.

What’s Next? Call to Action

The 2018 legislative session is a 60-day session during which only a supplemental State budget will be approved. We are focusing on 1) continuing to advocate for funding to cover hearing aids for adults under Medicaid—Governor Inslee’s proposed supplemental budget includes this funding, and 2) advocating for legislation (HB 2856) requiring hearing aid buyers be informed about the benefits of telecoils and of their choices related to telecoils.

Your help is needed!

- During this legislative session, please call or email your state representative and senator. Tell them about the importance of hearing aids and that telecoils are imperative for you to use ADA-mandated assistive listening systems. Use your own story to explain the importance of hearing in your daily life.

- Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper. Emphasize the importance of accessibility and affordability related to hearing. Educate others with your own story about hearing loss.

- Speak at an organization to which you belong. Help HLAA-WA extend its reach. In every organization, there are people who have hearing loss but don’t have enough information. Use your story and knowledge to help educate people at your organization.

To offer your support—or for assistance in taking these advocacy steps—contact Cheri Perazzoli, HLAA-WA Director of Advocacy, at cheripz@gmail.com.

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Seen and Heard

HLAA-WA 2017 Annual Meeting

HLAA-WA held its Annual Meeting on October 28, 2017, at the Everett Public Library.

The morning program, attended by HLAA-WA Trustees and other HLAA members, included a discussion of legislative initiatives that HLAA-WA is supporting (see the articles in this issue of Sound Waves).

Director of Advocacy Cheri Perazzoli, Legislative Liaison Diana Thompson and Secretary Cynthia Stewart led discussions about hearing loss-related topics which they expected the Washington State Legislature to consider during its 2018 session.

HLAA-WA hopes the topics will become part of the supplemental budget that the Legislature will approve for the State in 2018.

HLAA-WA President Warren Weissman reported on voting for 2018 Trustees. Current Trustees Sandra Bunning, Bill Collison, Cheri Perazzoli and Karen Utter were reelected to new three-year terms. Trustees Judi Carr and Kimberly Parker didn’t seek reelection and left the Board as of December 31, 2017. Judi and Kimberly were thanked for their service to HLAA-WA and received certificates of appreciation.

The Board of Trustees also voted to re-elect the current slate of HLAA-WA officers for 2018. Warren Weissman remains President, Cynthia Stewart continues as Secretary and Bill Collison remains Treasurer. Cheri Perazzoli continues in her role as Director of Advocacy and as a member of the organization’s Executive Committee. Karen Utter, as Immediate Past President, will continue providing advice to the Executive Committee.

Walk4Hearing

HLAA member Elizabeth Jensen reports that she participated in the Walk4Hearing in Mesa, Arizona, on November 11, 2017.

She joined over 300 other walkers while she was on vacation in Arizona and tells us it was a beautiful, warm day and that she was thrilled to do her very first Walk4Hearing.

Elizabeth is very thankful to the donors who supported her, and proud to support people with hearing loss through Walk4Hearing. She says she is looking forward to matching a 2018 vacation with another Walk4Hearing.
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
Temporarily Not Meeting—Email for information.
Hearing assistance: amplification, induction loop, CART (real-time captioning).
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

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.

Sign up for the E-News (it’s free) and other HLAA-WA announcements at http://eepurl.com/b3_Ko9.

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.

Summaries of Hearing Loss Magazine are 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!
The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) adopted rules in December 2016 calling for a gradual transition from text telephony (TTY) technology to real-time text (RTT) technology. RTT is similar to texting, but the user can opt for the message to appear on the destination handset as it is typed, without the need to press “send.” The objective is to make RTT comparable with voice communications in terms of low latency (delays) and dropped calls.

The FCC is requiring that nationwide mobile service providers offer a downloadable RTT application or plug-in, or implement changes to their networks to support RTT, beginning on December 31, 2017. They must offer at least one RTT-capable handset by that date. By December 31, 2019, all nationwide carriers must support RTT on all their new wireless handsets. The comparable deadlines for regional and local carriers are June 30, 2020, and June 30, 2021.

RTT improves accessible emergency communications and has other advantages over TTY:

- RTT eliminates the need to purchase specialized devices, such as TTYs, to send text in real time, and calls can be initiated and received using the same ten-digit numbers used for voice calls;
- Both parties to an RTT call can send and receive text in real time at the same time, and RTT is expected to be more reliable than TTY technology, resulting in less garbling and fewer drop-offs on calls;
- RTT provides callers with more characters for typing than TTYs, allowing conversations using the full “international character set.”
- Using RTT, one can call other RTT users, regardless of the network or device they use, as well as TTY users; emergency services can be reached by dialing 911 and relay services by dialing 711.

As the transition to RTT will be gradual, when buying a wireless handset people should ask if it will be RTT-capable and when their service provider will support RTT on its network. Tablet computers currently are not covered by FCC rules, but may eventually be RTT-capable as well.

You can read more about RTT at https://www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/real-time-text-improving-accessible-telecommunications.
Berlin Conference  cont. from page 1

make this vision a reality. I attended the conference on behalf of HLAA and HLAA-WA, joining several other HLAA members from around the country, including HLAA national loop advocate Dr. Juliette Sterkens.

This was the fourth international loop conference. The conferences were developed by IFHOH, and the 2017 conference was sponsored by the German Association of the Deaf, Deutscher Schwerhörigenbund e.V. “Future Loops” brought together more than 200 people to outline policy that advances universal hearing access and inclusion.

Presenters at the conference shared their ideas on technology and innovation, on research and real life, and placed emphasis on standards. Hearing loss advocates eagerly shared their hearing loop success stories and sought to learn from the achievements of others. The presentations underscored that it is critical for people with hearing loss to speak out and work closely with policy makers and technology vendors to ensure that accessibility solutions reflect the needs and preferences of those with hearing loss.

I was particularly inspired by a presentation on the success of “Hearing Loop Guerilla,” an initiative in which volunteers across Norway checked public buildings for hearing loops and advocated for hearing loops. The Guerilla activists, mostly seniors passionate about equality, checked 205 public buildings during the six-month campaign. Forty percent of town hall meeting rooms did not have the functioning loops required by Norwegian law. The Guerilla campaign generated media attention, disseminating information about loops, and inspired other Norwegians to take up the cause.

Advocacy campaigns such as “Hearing Loop Guerilla,” as well as “Like the Mic,” and “Get in the Hearing Loop,” in the U.S. and in Washington State, are great opportunities for improving hearing accessibility and enriching the lives of people with hearing loss. Grassroots campaigns make

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Berlin Conference  cont. from page 6

Hearing loss visible. They foster inclusion on a personal level because they occur when people respond to learning about tools and technologies that enable people with hearing loss to hear better in public venues.

IFHOH develops policy on key issues related to hearing loss and issues statements to influence policy makers and advance the rights hard of hearing people. The statement issued at the 2017 “Future Loops” Conference stresses the importance of installing hearing loops in large public venues, thereby providing access for people with hearing loss. It also stresses the importance of including telecoils in all hearing aids. The statement further calls for consistent platforms and performance standards for accessibility, and for the identification and use of best practices for accessibility systems in large venues.

For most folks, hearing access begins with a hearing aid. I was surprised to learn that even though Berlin is a very accessible city, many people lack communication access due to the high cost of hearing aids. Elke Breitenbach, a member of Berlin’s Senate (the city’s government), spoke at the conference and her comment that hearing access is a human right, not a gift of charity, really stayed with me. Imagine how much progress we could make if American society and governments viewed hearing access as a human right.

I left the conference wondering what we could accomplish if the hearing technology industry, in addition to selling hearing aids and other products, actively promoted universal hearing access. Hearing aid manufacturers, in particular, strongly influence consumers, audiologists, doctors and policy makers.

What if the hearing technology industry:

- marketed telecoil features and benefits?
- invested in a public service campaign calling for everyone to “Get in the Hearing Loop”?
- encouraged the installation of hearing loops in local communities?
- Sought to make the signage for hearing loss access as recognizable as the wheel chair symbol?

If the hearing technology industry, the hard of hearing community and policy makers all join forces, we can work together to create a world in which hearing access truly is universal. Then all those with hearing loss could seamlessly participate in all aspects of society.

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HLAA-WA Director of Advocacy Cheri Perazzoli, Secretary Cynthia Stewart, Legislative Liaison Diana Thompson, past President Karen Utter and current President Warren Weissman attended. HLAA-WA’s outreach table was visited by many of the approximately 450 conference attendees, who included legislators, policy makers, civic leaders, state, county and city employees, senior activists and providers of services for seniors.

The Conference, held in Tacoma, covered topics including health care, Medicare, Medicaid, long-term care, guardianship, housing, and the State budget. Speakers were from State government, advocacy organizations, non-profit service providers and community groups.

Preventing Antibiotic and Chemo-Induced Hearing Loss

HLAA member Linda Worley notes the potential importance of recent news from the Seattle-based Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center.

Dr. Julian Simon and other researchers have identified a compound, now being readied for clinical trials in human subjects, which is expected to protect hair cells in human ears against the toxicity of certain antibiotics and chemotherapy drugs.

Dr. Simon’s research has used the hair cells on the bodies of zebrafish (they are similar to human inner ear hair cells) to test for compounds that will block the toxic impact of aminoglycoside antibiotics and certain chemotherapies. These drugs are highly effective in treating infections or cancers, but their side effects can be significant. Side effects can include the irreversible death of inner-ear hair cells, resulting in hearing loss and tinnitus.

Subsequent tests on rats have helped to refine the compound identified by Dr. Simon as potentially effective in preventing inner ear hair cell damage. (See more information at http://www.fredhutch.org/en/news/center-news/2017/06/preventing-chemo-induced-hearing-loss.html, and http://www.fredhutch.org/en/news/spotlight/2017/11/hb_simon_jmedchem.html.)

Senior Lobby Conference 2017

HLAA-WA was heavily represented at the 2017 Fall Conference sponsored on October 19, 2017, by the Washington Senior Citizens’ Foundation.

HLAA-WA Director of Advocacy Cheri Perazzoli, Secretary Cynthia Stewart, Legislative Liaison Diana Thompson, past President Karen Utter and current President Warren Weissman attended. HLAA-WA’s outreach table was visited by many of the approximately 450 conference attendees, who included legislators, policy makers, civic leaders, state, county and city employees, senior activists and providers of services for seniors.

The Conference, held in Tacoma, covered topics including health care, Medicare, Medicaid, long-term care, guardianship, housing, and the State budget. Speakers were from State government, advocacy organizations, non-profit service providers and community groups.
The proposed funding would assist an estimated 6,300 Washington residents.

Medicaid—Apple Health in Washington State—provides health care services to low-income Washingtonians. While the federal government requires all states to provide Medicaid coverage of hearing aids for persons under age 21, coverage for persons age 21 and older is optional. Washington State covered hearing aids for adults through the end of 2010, when coverage was discontinued due to budget constraints related to the Great Recession.

The biennial budget approved by the State Senate in mid-2017 included coverage of hearing aids for adults, and the House Health Care and Wellness Committee also voted for the coverage. But the final budget for 2017 did not include this funding once all the negotiations were completed. We are optimistic that hearing aid coverage will be restored in the final 2018 supplemental budget because the Governor and both houses of the Legislature are now controlled by the same party, increasing the chances that the Governor’s proposed supplemental budget will be approved.

Since late 2014, HLAA-WA has been advocating to get hearing aid coverage for adults restored to prior levels, at a minimum. We have provided input to legislators regarding proposed legislation and budget provisos during the 2016 and 2017 legislative sessions. We have testified before multiple legislative committees, providing expert testimony about hearing loss and personal stories about journeys related to hearing loss. HLAA representatives found time to get to Olympia to testify, even when receiving less than 24 hours of notice about the scheduling of hearings.

We also wrote letters to the Governor on behalf of HLAA-WA and requested HLAA members write individual letters to their legislators. And we coordinated closely with other organizations, including AARP.

Through our efforts, legislators and state employees have become more knowledgeable about hearing loss and have begun to recognize the importance of hearing health to the State’s population, particularly as the population ages.

The 2018 legislative session began in January 2018, and we will once again need your assistance. By writing to or meeting with your legislators, you help them understand hearing loss and the importance of covering hearing aids for adults under Medicaid.●
Alzheimer’s Plan  cont. from page 1

HLAA-WA representatives testified during the comment period of the DSHS-led working group that developed the Alzheimer’s Plan. We submitted two papers about hearing loss to the working group and spoke informally with working group members several times. Following completion of the Alzheimer’s Plan, the DAC was created to help implement the Plan. HLAA-WA was invited to participate in the DAC. Christine Seymour initially, and Diana Thompson currently, have both represented HLAA-WA on the DAC.

Our involvement is important for multiple reasons:

a. Aging is an important factor in the development of both hearing loss and dementia;

b. A number of studies have found an association between hearing loss and an increased risk of dementia, and/or between hearing loss and accelerated cognitive decline;

c. Hearing loss and dementia have many symptoms in common. Hearing loss can be mistaken for dementia and can cause dementia to be over diagnosed;

d. Hearing aids, by improving the ability of persons with dementia to follow instructions and function, can improve quality of life and reduce caregiver burden;

e. Medical professionals and caregivers of seniors often lack adequate knowledge about the symptoms and impact of hearing loss, about its treatment, and about how to communicate with persons with hearing loss.

While research has not established a causal relationship between hearing loss and dementia, we hope that treatment of hearing loss can help to prevent or delay cognitive decline and dementia. A diagnosis of dementia takes into account both cognitive decline and the ability to function.

The DAC recently published a booklet entitled “Dementia Road Map: Guide for Family and Care Partners” This excellent resource includes references to hearing, hearing loss and hearing aids. The DAC also has published “Brief Cognitive Screening Tools for Primary Care Practice.” This document emphasizes (see screening recommendations on page 3) that hearing loss may complicate cognitive testing, that hearing should be assessed prior to cognitive evaluation, and that appropriate referrals and treatment may be needed before cognitive assessment. The document notes the potential need for assistive listening devices (such as Pocket Talkers) when performing a cognitive evaluation. Both documents are online at https://www.dshs.wa.gov/altsa/stakeholders/.

We will maintain our DAC membership to continue educating and influencing policy makers regarding the important relationship between hearing loss and dementia.

HLAA-WA and the Bree Collaborative Report on Alzheimer’s Disease

By Diana Thompson, HLAA-WA Legislative Liaison

The Dr. Robert Bree Collaborative is a forum where public and private health care stakeholders seek to improve the quality, outcomes, and cost effectiveness of health care in Washington State. It provides recommendations to the State’s Health Care Authority. Its members are appointed by Washington’s Governor.

In November 2017, the Bree Collaborative completed a draft report, “Alzheimer’s Disease and Other Dementias Report and Recommendations.” The Bree Collaborative highlighted that the researchers of a report entitled “Dementia Prevention, Intervention and Care,” published in July 2017 in The Lancet, concluded that hearing loss is one of nine potentially-modifiable risk factors for dementia. (The Lancet is a highly-regarded British medical journal.)

Except for mentioning The Lancet’s conclusion and a reference to hearing aids, the Bree Collaborative’s draft report did not take hearing loss into consideration. During the written public comment period, we proposed changes to the draft and provided information about hearing loss. We then attended the Bree Collaborative’s next workgroup meeting, providing further input.

Fortunately, our comments had considerable impact on the final report. For instance, the final purpose statement states: “Hearing loss, associated with increasing age, is also associated with cognitive decline and increased risk of dementia.” The final report also recognizes the importance of assessing for and appropriately treating hearing loss, includes links both to an article on symptoms of hearing loss and one on communicating with persons with hearing loss. It lists HLAA-WA as a resource.

We hope this additional information will strengthen the focus on hearing loss throughout the work of the DAC, and that of the governmental and private entities that treat and support people with dementia.
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.

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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.

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Sound Waves
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Hearing Loss Association of America, Washington State Association

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

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HLAA2018 Convention EARLY registration is OPEN!
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see all the details at http://www.hearingloss.org/content/convention.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU IN MINNEAPOLIS!

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