Television—the analog sunset
By Steve Hillson, Equipment Specialist
“The Store” at the Hearing, Speech, and Deafness Center

When traditional analog television signals cease in mid-February of 2009, there will be three choices for dealing with the situation: (1) purchase a high-definition digital television to take full advantage of the new technology; (2) keep your old TV and purchase a digital-to-analog converter box (with or without promised government vouchers); or (3) subscribe to a cable service that will provide an analog signal to your old TV.

On the surface, this is simple enough. With the government’s $40 vouchers thrown in, converter boxes shouldn’t cost more than $20. The price of digital television is coming down. No matter how you decide to react to the end of analog TV, money will change hands.

For those of you considering a new, digital television, I’ve done some informal research at local electronic stores that I hope will be of interest. Most of the salespeople I spoke with hadn’t considered the effects of hearing loss, but they were willing to think through it when I explained what features would be useful. Just like buying a car, if you don’t understand the basic technology, you could get taken for a ride (no pun intended).

Most stores have their display models optimized to provide an eye-popping visual experience. This can be amusing; but unless the characters in your favorite program always wear lime green jackets with shocking orange hair, you should look past the bright colors and pay attention to what any specific television can do for you.

SOUND
Besides stunning visual content, digital TVs promise a wide range of audio options ranging from simple stereo to surround sound, with any number of extra speakers. The high-end stores will be more than happy to talk to you about four, five, or even six-speaker surround sound systems for that “theatre experience” in your home.

This can be a lot of fun to play around with, but bringing a hearing aid or CI processor into the mix is not something the various manufacturers seem prepared for. Think of your last frustrating time at a movie theatre and then imagine paying your hard-earned money to reproduce the effect in your own home on a daily basis—not really worth the investment. From the various testing I’ve done personally, I have not found a satisfying way to achieve a surround effect without scattering speech and important environmental sounds. For instance, when an actor starts

(Continued on page 2)
speaking on the left side of the room and then walks across the screen to end his sentence on the right, chances are it will sound like two different people talking.

There are also expensive devices between the TV and the external speakers that are needed to condition and process the audio signals into something approximating the experience of natural sound. Unless you have more than a few thousand dollars to play with and a sales person you trust, building a hearing loss friendly surround system is going to be a long process of experimentation. Now, this doesn't mean hard of hearing people don't get to play with the new toys! Basically, at the heart of things, hearing aids and CI processors are made to focus on one person speaking in front of you in a quiet room. Think of your TV as that person.

Unlike the often-disappointing speakers found in many traditional TVs, the new digital units normally have very good speakers built into them, with internal menus that allow you to adjust the treble and bass for better clarity. Ask the sales person to walk you through the menu, and if possible, listen to the same program with the preset and then the adjusted audio settings. Basically, you will want to boost the frequencies you have trouble with and lower the ones you hear too much of. Another option is a speaker system that combines the elements of a surround system into a single wall unit that can be mounted directly in front of you under the TV. This puts all the sound you want into that ideal listening position for your hearing aids or CI processor. Again, some adjustments to the TV's audio menu may be necessary.

People who prefer to use assistive listening systems with their TVs will still have that option. Digital TVs come with a plethora of audio output connections. It may be necessary to use splitter cables to connect an assistive listening device if you are setting up surround sound at the same time for the rest of the family. Some older models of plasma TVs put out an infrared background signal that many infrared listening devices pick up as an annoying static or buzzing sound, but I have not been able to locate solid information on which ones have a problem and which don’t. If plasma is the technology of your dreams, you may need to switch to a radio frequency (FM) listening device. FM works just like its infrared counterpart, but without the sensitivity to the light from the TV. Other digital TVs, such as LCDs, will not have the infrared noise problem.

CLOSED CAPTIONING
Like any television sold in the US, digital TVs must have closed caption ability. Ask the sales person to go into the menu and preview this for you. I have noticed a wide range of captioning styles between brands. Some are large and clear, others are fuzzy, and some are too small for comfort. If you are a caption reader, you really want to test drive this feature before making any purchase. In addition, there is
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One other issue related to closed captioning is not so much a television issue as it is an Internet problem. Digital cable services are able to offer additional features, such as On Demand programming, by merging high-speed Internet into their cable signal. When you order your favorite film these days, it is not coming from your local cable office. Instead, the program is sent over the Internet to your cable connection. Standards for Internet captioning are not set yet, and what you are watching is an Internet entity, not a pre-recorded tape or DVD which is covered by captioning legislation. Talk with your cable company about closed caption availability to avoid paying for services you can’t use. It’s a brave new digital world, but with a little bit of planning, you will be able to enjoy the benefits of this technology.

Where’s the CC?
We’ve all had problems at one time or another trying to figure out how to turn on the #@$$% captions. Often, this has happened in a hotel room, and we’ve had to call the front desk. The National Advocacy Committee wants to see a standard captioning control on TV sets. You can help by answering the following questions:

- Where do you find your captioning link? (Remote or TV.)
- Is it easy to locate?
- Where would you prefer to locate it?
- How many TV sets do you own?
- Who is the manufacturer?
- How old is your TV set, or what year did you purchase it?
- Is it digital, high definition, or analog?
- If analog, are you planning on replacing it, or are you planning to buy a converter box?

Please reply to Winnie Hargis, committee chair, and put “TV Captioning” in the subject line: whargis@mindstream.net.

Resources
- DTV—What every consumer with hearing loss should know: www.hearingloss.org/advocacy/DTVFAQs.asp
- Countdown to DTV Transition: www.dtv.gov/

Tacoma-Pierce County Livable Communities Fair
Saturday May 17, 9:00am - 4:00pm, Tacoma Dome
Look for our HLA-WA table!

It's free, fun and informative! This fair is a county-wide effort aimed at raising awareness about projects and programs that make communities more livable. Like a garden or home show, the LCF provides interactive displays on a wide range of topics, including energy conservation, carpooling, recycling, neighborhood emergency preparedness, affordable housing, water quality, public safety, clean environment, agriculture, recreation, health, education, community involvement, children’s activities, and much more. For more information: www.livablepiercecounty.org or 253-798-7477.

Changing the world one fair at a time

Sound Waves is a quarterly publication of the Hearing Loss Association of Washington (HLA-WA), PO Box 4025, Kent, WA 98089. Newsletters are published August, November, February, and May and can be downloaded free: http://www.hearingloss-wa.org. To receive a copy by U.S. mail, there is a $10.00 subscription fee (see back of this newsletter for information).

We welcome your articles, letters, and notices of coming events. Articles may be abbreviated due to space constraints. Opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of HLA-WA or HLAA. Mention of goods or services does not mean endorsement, nor does exclusion suggest disapproval. Any portion of this newsletter may be reprinted or disseminated, as long as credit is given to the individual author or to this publication. We encourage health professionals to make copies available to their clients. Please contact the editor about advertising rates.
HSDC is a non-profit organization, known for our commitment to service. We take the time to get to know our clients, involving family whenever possible.

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- Our Seattle location features a specialized store for products like amplified phones and flashing smoke detectors - also available online at hsdccstore.com
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- We opened an all-new, comfortable facility just 4 years ago!

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Hearing aids from HSDC include...

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WashCap—an ambitious goal for access
By John Waldo, Bainbridge Island

When Congress passed the Americans with Disabilities Act almost 20 years ago, its purpose was “to provide a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities,” specifically including “the discriminatory effects of communication barriers.” Despite some conspicuous successes—most notably, closed-captioned television—those barriers still confront people like us with significant hearing issues.

Why haven’t the barriers fallen? For the most part, neither the ADA nor the State of Washington Law Against Discrimination is self-enforcing. Rather, those laws provide tools to demolish the barriers we face, but leave it to us to use them. And we have generally been reluctant to do so, whether out of resistance to the unfamiliar, a commendable wish to avoid confrontation, or a feeling that somehow we’re not entitled to take our place in society.

As a practicing attorney on Bainbridge Island, with a moderate-profound binaural loss, I’m familiar both with the tools the law provides us and with the frustrations we face. I think it’s time to use the legal tools to begin breaking down those barriers.

To that end, I’m undertaking what I call the Washington Communications Access Project, or WashCap. Its goal is ambitious but simple—to remove communications barriers to public places in Washington by January 1 of 2015.

Seven years from now, I want to be able to go to a city government meeting, attend a play or lecture, go to a professional seminar, go to a movie, a restaurant or a bar, ride on the ferry, the train, or bus, or catch an airplane, and know that I’ll understand what is being communicated—and that the rewards of the experience will outweigh the frustrations. And I want everyone else with a hearing loss to have the same opportunities anywhere in Washington.

How will WashCap make that happen? We begin by asking nicely—at least twice—for accommodations, while also stating plainly our belief that the law entitles us to what we are seeking. We offer to work together. But if the facility declines to acknowledge that we are entitled to barrier-free treatment, or declines to work meaningfully toward that goal, then our recourse will be to go to court. And to do that, we will need folks who are ready to stand up for themselves and all of us by being named as plaintiffs in a suit asking for our legal rights.

To date, we have received a very encouraging response from the Seattle Center and its multiple venues, a moderately encouraging response from the Washington State Ferries and no response from the Paramount Theatre.

Although WashCap is not affiliated with HLA-WA, its Board of Trustees has endorsed WashCap, and I will keep them informed of our progress—both the successes and the frustrations. If you want personal updates, would like to see copies of my communications with various facilities, or would like to discuss barriers you or someone you know are encountering, please get in touch with me by email at johnfwaldo@hotmail.com.

Learn-as-you-go
By Bruce Rafford, Deer Park

In the newspaper I see a "press release" about a meeting that may be of interest to the public. There is a meeting place and a time, but no mention of who to call for accommodations. Why not? I call or visit the city or county who is sponsoring this meeting. In order to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, any public entity with more than 50 employees must establish an ADA Coordinator, publish the coordinator’s name and contact information for accommodations, and provide grievance procedures (28 CFR, Section 35.107). Last year when I was in central Washington, I found a problem in a county court, but no ADA Coordinator to contact. Since then, one has been appointed.

Today I got a returned call from the Secretary of State’s office (Washington State). They admitted I am right about their responsibility to close caption the public service announcement (PSA) on voter registration for the coming election. I have also been working with various businesses that do PSAs to see that they’re captioned too.

But there is more than that—city, county, and state public meetings; unemployment training; DSHS training to accommodate their clients; drivers licensing and road test communications during the test…the list goes on and on. How do I get results? I ask questions and I learn as I go. But I also make sure I know the law before I ask the questions. If they cannot answer those questions, I ask where to go to for the answers and keep moving up the line until I get to where I can get those answers.
I was implanted with the Nucleus 22 technology January 28, 1988. Born with 25% hearing, one ear had a 99.5% hearing loss and the other a 99% hearing loss by the time I got the implant. So which ear did they implant? Yep, the worst ear. In hindsight, I’m grateful I only had two cochlear implant brands to choose from: the Nucleus technology, and the 3M Ineraid technology. I can’t imagine having to research what’s available today.

February 28, 1988, I was hooked up with the wearable speech processor (WSP). Oh my gosh, the world was noisy! Driving home, I heard the tires slapping the road. Closing the draperies that night was a noisy experience! I asked my kids why they didn’t tell me the rods needed some oiling. That weekend I was busy spraying WD-40 on all the drapery rods. And the cats never stopped meowing!

When I got my implant, I was a single mom with a 13 year-old daughter and an 11 year-old son. I have to tell you, not only was the implant a big adjustment for me, it was also a big adjustment for the kids! All of a sudden they had a mom who could hear and they couldn’t get away with things. In fact, I came home from work one day, about five months after hook up, and found my daughter sobbing her heart out. I asked her what was the matter, and she responded that she never has any privacy since I had that surgery to help me hear. She asked me to go back to the hospital and have them take that awful thing out so she could have some privacy. I smiled sweetly at her. "Honey, if you want privacy, you can go in your room and shut the door." Today she is more than delighted I never did go back to the hospital and have them take that "awful thing" out of my head.

Another sweet revenge: One evening, while sitting in the living room reading the paper, I heard the kids arguing in the family room. “What is going on?” I asked. The stunned looks on their faces were priceless, and I saw my son say to his sister, “Mom can hear us!” I turned around and walked back through the house and out the door to the front yard where I threw my arms in the air and yelled, “Yes!”

Granted, it was tough for me in the beginning. I wanted the implant so I could understand people better, not hear all the noise the world produces. Because I had never heard the loud tones before the implant, the audiologists and I had a tough time setting my threshold levels. I went back every week for a new map for about six months, and then it tapered off to about once every other month. Then gradually it decreased to once every six months, and then once a year. Remember, this was back in 1988, when there was only one speech coding strategy available. Of course the WSP was not as well made as today’s newer technologies.

The WSP was about 3 x 5 inches in size and ran on two AA batteries, with cords running up to the head-set. It was big, bulky, and somewhat heavy. I wore it on a belt underneath dresses, and I wore it outside when I wore pants and skirts. The WSP tended to lose maps occasionally, and I would have to get reprogrammed. I remember a camping trip where as soon as my kids and I arrived at the campsite, the WSP died. I spent the whole weekend in frustrating silence, until I could get back into the audiologist’s office Monday morning.

At the time of my implant, I could not hear my son’s voice. About four months after my hook-up, my son was talking to me one day, and it suddenly hit me that I could hear him! I told him, "Honey, I can hear your voice and it is just beautiful!" "Aw shucks, Mom!"

Because I did so well, I finished my scheduled year-long rehabilitation in five months. At that point, I started learning to hear on the phone. It was a very long process, but I was able to have short phone conversations with family members and a couple of best friends from high school. They were thrilled I could hear a little on the phone, so they worked with me by calling me up to set up “girl” dates. I practiced using the phone by dialing theaters and listening to their recordings. I also listened to soap opera updates. Then I graduated to being able to call in prescription refills, make appointments, and retrieve my bank account information. With more detailed information, like insurance, I relied on the TTY. (Now I e-mail my insurance agents, only because it’s more convenient.)

Now that I’m a grammy of two young boys and a preteen girl, I’m so grateful that I have my implant. Kids are generally very difficult to understand, but my grandkids know they have to look at me when they talk—and they have to speak.

(Continued on page 7)
Sound Waves

Spring 2008

Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program (TED)

If you live in Washington State and have a hearing loss, you are eligible for an amplified phone, text phone (VCO or CapTel), or TTY, as well as a telephone ring signaling device. A contract trainer will deliver the equipment and show you how to use it. Cost is based upon income. Contact Kelly Robison, TED Program Manager: 1-800-422-7930/V; 1-800-422-7941/TTY; or write to Telecommunications Equipment Distribution, PO Box 45301, Olympia, WA 98504; or e-mail robiskd@dshs.wa.gov.

Hearing aids for low income people

Lions Clubs work with fitter/dispensers and audiologists to provide free refurbished hearing aids to anyone who qualifies financially. Contact your local Lions Club or provider to apply. If your annual income is $23,500 or below (single wage earner), you qualify for new high-quality, low-cost hearing aids through the Lions AUDIENT program. Call 1-877-283-4368 or see http://www.audientalliance.org to download an application. You will be referred to an AUDIENT provider in your area.

Low-interest loans

Washington Assistive Technology Foundation (WATF) offers low-interest loans to Washington residents for assistive technology (e.g., hearing aids, augmentative communication devices, computers with adaptive equipment). See the WATF website (http://www.watf.org) or call 206-328-5116/V or 800-214-8731 (Voice) or 1-888-808-8942 (TTY). No income restrictions.
My previous telephone was amplified, but I had problems—great problems. I couldn’t understand what my daughter, Linda, or my good friends were saying to me. I was downhearted and embarrassed to use the phone. I even had to drive down to the doctors’ offices to make appointments in person, because I knew I would make mistakes over the phone!

Thanks to a trainer with the Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program, I now have a CapTel phone. I use it all the time to talk to Linda and my friends. I can easily make appointments. I feel more like my old self. I can pick up the phone and not be afraid of it, because I can read captions and hear at the same time. I hope new users feel the same way I do!

Editor: CapTel is available only through the state distribution program. See sidebar Page 7 for info on how to apply.

We appreciate your support!

Your donations help us fund projects that benefit people with hearing loss. We are especially grateful for our newsletter advertising sponsors, Washington Relay, and the Hearing, Speech, & Deafness Center for advertising in our newsletter and for Washington Relay for advertising on our website. The following contributions are for November 2007 through January 2008.

- Adrian Bailey, Seattle
- Dale & Joanne Becker, West Richland
- Robert Branigin, Seattle
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- Mary Ann Cook, Lake Forest Park
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- Elaine Teel, Mill Creek
- Diane Thompson, Bellevue
- Grace Tiessen, Pasadena, CA
- Wynona Tyson, Seattle
- Margaret Wales, Poulsbo
- Anonymous – 1

United Way

Did you know you can make regular United Way contributions and help hard of hearing people in our state? These readers have supported this newsletter throughout the year through United Way:

- Erlene Little, Oak Harbor
- Timmie Mauck, Poulsbo
- Dean Olson, Seattle
- John C. Robbins, Renton
- Della Ramsden, Seattle
- George Ross, Seattle
- Lilia Smith, Camano Island
- Beverly Ziarko, Kent
- United Way Kitsap County, unknown donor

Microsoft Match

- Mark and Susan Svancarek, Redmond

Double your donation!

Many employers will match their employees’ donations to non-profit organizations. If you are planning to make a donation to HLA-WA please ask your employer if your company has a matching gifts program. We are a 501(c)(3) organization.

Safeco Insurance Employee Giving Programs

- Mulushewa Asgehedom, Kent
HLA-WA leaders head task forces

Kudos to Bert Lederer and Charlene MacKenzie, members of the HLA-WA Board of Trustees, for spearheading task forces for two advocacy and educational efforts in our state.

Partnership with National Park:
HLA-WA has formed a partnership with North Cascades National Park to make the park accessible to hard of hearing visitors. Each year over 50,000 people come to the Visitors Center in Newhalem and 30,000 to the Visitor Information Center in Sedro Wooley. Almost half of them are in the 50-and-older age range, where there is the highest percentage of hearing loss.

Bert and Charlene have participated in two sessions with key personnel, including a tour of park facilities to determine current access for hard of hearing people. They will present a comprehensive Hearing Accessibility Program for the Park Superintendent and his management team on February 20. The next step will be assisting managers in a detailed review of current access for the hard of hearing, determining barriers, and recommending improvements. After that, training sessions will be planned for all park employees, including seasonal volunteers.

North Cascades National Park has expressed an interest in a continuing partnership with HLA-WA, rather than a one-shot project.

HLA-WA AARP Task force moves ahead
The HLA-WA AARP task force is continuing its efforts in AARP’s Driver Safety Program. The task force has formed a partnership with the Washington State Drivers Safety Program to make all courses and meetings hearing accessible. The task force’s plan is currently under study by the national AARP staff in Washington, D.C., for possible use in all 50 states.

Bert and Charlene have been working on this project for three years and have presented several training programs in Washington. Last year, they gave a special session on hearing accessibility during the Regional Conference in Helena, Montana, attended by the Driver Safety Program Coordinators of all the Western States. On January 31, they presented a special pilot program on hearing accessibility for Washington State District 20, which includes Whatcom and Skagit Counties.

Quality of life study for youth
The Seattle Quality of Life Group is looking for deaf or hard of hearing youth, ages 11-18, as well as parents of deaf or hard of hearing children from 5 to 10, to participate in a research study. The goal is to create a new questionnaire that measures quality of life for children with hearing loss. It will help researchers in a variety of fields (health, audiology, education, social work, and public policy) and ultimately help children and youth with hearing loss.

Participants will be sent $25 as a thank you for their time and effort. Information is confidential. More info: go to the website: projectHQL@u.washington.edu or call 1-800-283-5827 (V/TTY).

Conventions—close to home

2008 HLAA Convention
June 12 – 15, Grand Sierra Resort and Casino, Reno, NV
The Hearing Loss Association of America convention is a highly interactive and accessible event for all people who are affected by hearing loss. The program includes dynamic speakers, dozens of instructive workshops, and an informative research symposium. The exhibit hall hosts a range of hearing loss related products, services, and information. The Grand Sierra Resort and Casino offers more than just gaming. Family friendly, the resort provides a 50-lane bowling alley, an Aqua Golf Lake-top Driving Range, a golf simulator, a Funquest Family Entertainment Center—and more. For details, see web site: www.hearingloss.org/convention.

“Global Community of Communication”
The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association joins with the International Federation of Hard of Hearing People in hosting the eighth International Hard of Hearing Congress in Vancouver, Canada July 2-6. This prestigious international conference, held every four years, draws presenters and participants from countries around the world. The theme for Congress 2008, A Global Community of Communications, reflects the growing momentum to recognizing the significance of hearing loss as a major health and socioeconomic concern. For details, see: http://chha-ifhohcongress2008.com
Note: Early-bird registration is good until February 29.
Chapters in Washington
Information, Education, advocacy, and support

Meeting times and days sometimes change, and most chapters take a summer break. See our website for more information on our chapters.

BELLEVUE—2nd Sat. 1:00 pm; Lake Sammamish Four Square Church, Rm. 104, 14434 NE 8th St., Bellevue; amplification, FM. Prudence Clem: 425-746-1074 or e-mail Mary Carter, greymare@aol.com.

BOTHELL—NEW! 4th Mon. 2:30 pm; Northshore Senior Center, 2nd floor conference room 202, 10201 E. Riverside Dr., Bothell. Gloria Campbell: GCampb2965@aol.com or Malka Fricks: 425-821-1772.

DES MOINES—3rd Wed. 1:30 pm; Wesley Homes, 815 S. 216th St., Des Moines; amplification. Doug Gray: 206-870-2029 or Elaine Maros: elainemaros1@juno.com.

EAST JEFFERSON CO.—4th Mon. 1:00 pm; Port Townsend Community Ctr., 620 Tyler Street, Port Townsend; amplification, FM. Emily Mandelbaum: mandelbaum@olympus.net or 360-531-2247; or Sandy MacNair: 360-385-1347 or smacnair@cablespeed.com.

KITSAP—3rd Sat. 1:00 pm; Iris Room (lower level) at Silverdale Harrison Hosp., 1800 N.W. Myhre Road; amplification, FM. John Allen: 360-871-0997 or jcallen@hearingloss-wa.org.

PORT ANGELES—3rd Tues. 10:00 am; Port Angeles Senior Ctr., 328 E. 7th, Port Angeles; amplification, FM. Michael Bower: MABower@hearingloss-wa.org or 253-833-9147.

RENTON—2nd Fri. 12:30 pm; Renton Senior Ctr., 211 Burnett Ave. N., Renton; FM, real-time captioning. Glenda Philio: philiofam@juno.com.

SNOHOMISH CO.—NEW LOCATION! 3rd Sat. 11:00 am; Providence Medical Center, Pacific Campus, 916 Pacific Ave., Everett

WHATCOM—3rd Sat. 10:00 am; Christ the Servant Lutheran Church, 2600 Lakeway Dr., Bellingham; amplification, FM. Charlene MacKenzie: 360-738-3756 or charlenemackenzie@hearingloss-wa.org or Bert Lederer 360-319-4540 or bertlederer@hearingloss-wa.org.

University District chapter interest
Focus will be on those who are working or who may have attended our downtown chapter. We hope to include some social activities or dinner meetings for this group. Contact Karen Utter, Chapter Coordinator, for more information or for info on other chapters (see sidebar at right).

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University District chapter interest
Focus will be on those who are working or who may have attended our downtown chapter. We hope to include some social activities or dinner meetings for this group. Contact Karen Utter, Chapter Coordinator, for more information or for info on other chapters (see sidebar at right).
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