Sound Waves

HLAA Hearing Loss Association of America Washington State Association

Diana Thompson Receives Sound Generations Advocacy & Activism Award

By Warren Weissman, Sound Waves Editor

Diana Thompson received the 2019 Advocacy & Activism award from Sound Generations at the Inspire Positive Aging Awards Luncheon on June 26, 2019. Diana, a longstanding HLAA member received the award for her advocacy on behalf of older Washington State adults, including people with hearing loss.

Diana Thompson accepting the Advocacy & Activism Award, while Sound Generations CEO Jim Wigfall looks on.

Sound Generations, a non-profit organization serving older adults and adults with disabilities in King County, manages programs

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No Need for Plan B: The 2019 HLAA National Convention

By Debra Pearson, HLAA Member

I was nervous about the idea of going to my first HLAA convention, so I put it on the back burner. But in my American Sign Language (ASL) class at Bellevue College, I learned that Rochester, NY, site of this year's convention, has a huge Deaf community and college. I was doing well in class, so I thought, "If the convention is a total flop, then plan B is that I would at least practice my ASL skills and explore other avenues of learning." I registered.

I went to the convention with the goal of learning about hearing loss-related technology, about self-advocacy, and about laws to improve my employability and life experiences made dismal by hearing loss. What I discovered is that learning about hearing loss is like learning about gardening: this field of knowledge is

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Fending Off the Creeping Isolation

By Paul J. Pickett, HLAA Member

It's hard to say exactly when it started. Listening has never been a strong point with me—I was always a little dreamy and distracted. But when I had to hear something, I did just fine—until 10 years ago? Or 20?

I recall a few incidents with my kids at home. One day my wife and oldest son were walking around asking, "What's that noise?" Listening carefully, they finally hunted down the source. A GFI plug in our bathroom (the ones with the built-in circuit breakers and the buttons on the front) was emitting a low, high-pitched whine. I couldn't hear it at all.

A while after that, we were at the Pacific Science Center. They had a device where you could listen to tones and dial them higher and higher. Sure enough—my hearing cut out at a much lower frequency than for my wife or kids.

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Paul J. Pickett

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Many Thanks to our GiveBIG Donors for 2019! 12

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

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

Taking Restaurant Noise Off the Menu

By Warren Weissman, Sound Waves Editor

I'm always thrilled to see national media articles about the day-to-day challenges faced by those of us with hearing loss. A recent Washington Post article[1] summarized the frustrations posed by noisy restaurants. I hope the article is one more step on the path to creating awareness about excessive restaurant noise and causing restaurants to realize that noise and disrupted conversations are diminishing the dining experience for everyone.

Today's typical restaurant has hard surfaces, loud music, tight quarters and the louder and louder voices of people talking over the noise as the place fills up. It all makes for a dismal conversational experience, especially for anyone with hearing loss. There is research showing that difficulty understanding speech in noise often occurs earlier than the inability to hear distinct sounds like the hearing test tones used to diagnose hearing loss. It's no wonder that loud restaurants make it nearly impossible for people with hearing loss to have a conversation.

With profound hearing loss, I can't understand people in a restaurant where there is more than a moderate level of background noise. I employ many communication strategies—I look for information about noise levels in restaurant reviews, avoid restaurant rush hours, ask for a quieter table or a booth, pay attention to the location of music speakers and air conditioning vents, and seek out tables with enough light to see faces and without backlit situations. But it's rare that communication strategies alone enable me to hear and understand conversations in a restaurant, especially at a table with multiple people.

My friends and family like to eat out, as do I. Since avoiding restaurants is not an attractive option, what's the solution? Assistive technology has become an effective immediate solution for me. But in the medium term, self-advocacy and the work of organizations such as HLAA, together with media coverage, are the way to focus restaurant owners, designers and managers on reducing the noise level.

Technology Can Overcome the Noise

When I got my most recent hearing aid, my audiologist recommended a Resound hearing aid. She thought I would find the Resound Multi Mic (a clip-on, remote microphone that connects to the hearing aid via Bluetooth) very useful. She was right—when a dining companion clips the mic on their clothing and it points toward their mouth, or if I hold it in my hand and point it at someone's mouth, it's very directional. I hear mostly the speech I am trying to understand. With the smartphone app that controls my hearing aid, I can also mute my hearing aid microphone, blocking out background noise.

But in a really loud restaurant, even my directional mic may be overwhelmed by noise, and hearing multiple dining companions isn't possible unless they pass the mic around and hold it close to their mouths. But I no longer avoid restaurants—I still pick less noisy restaurants, and I employ communication strategies, but I go into a restaurant assuming I'll be able to participate in the

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Seen and Heard

Charlene MacKenzie Wins Hamilton Relay 2019 Better Hearing and Speech Month Recognition Award

Charlene McKenzie, co-founder of HLAA's Whatcom County Chapter, was recognized for her "significant contribution toward accessibility and quality of life in the areas of hearing loss and speech difficulty."

Hamilton Relay sponsored a celebration of Charlene's award at the June 15, 2019, meeting of the Whatcom County Chapter.

In addition to her continuing work with HLAA, Charlene is known for her work facilitating hearing loss management workshops, as a volunteer ambassador for *Dogs for Better Lives,* and as a mentor for people with hearing loss.

The Hamilton Relay award also highlighted Charlene's work on making driver safety classes accessible to individuals with hearing loss and her work to add captioning, assistive listening systems and sound amplification at North Cascades National Park.

Age, Hearing Loss, and Communication: What Are My Rights?

A recently-developed "**ADA Fact Sheet**," about the rights of people with hearing loss, is available at ***https://adata.org/factsheet/age-hearing-loss-and-communication-what-are-my-rights***.

Michael Richardson, Director of the Northwest ADA Center at the University of Washington, participated in the development of the fact sheet.

Michael and the whole team at the Northwest ADA Center are a great resource for obtaining information about the ADA and for understanding how the ADA protects people with hearing loss.

Read more about the Northwest ADA Center at ***http://nwadacenter.org/***.

HLAA-WA Co-Sponsors City of Seattle Forum on Planning an Accessible Event

The City of Seattle has produced a "**Community Guide to Accessible Events & Meetings. "**

On May 30, the City of Seattle, along with the Northwest Universal Design Council and several community partners (including HLAA-WA) sponsored a forum for event planners based on this Guide. The forum focused on how to make events welcoming and inclusive to all ages and all abilities.

According to Seattle-King County Aging and Disability Services, one in five adults nationwide report long-lasting health conditions or disabilities.

But many people with mild hearing or vision impairment don't consider themselves to have a disability, even though their hearing or visual limitation may cause them to feel excluded or to avoid events and activities.

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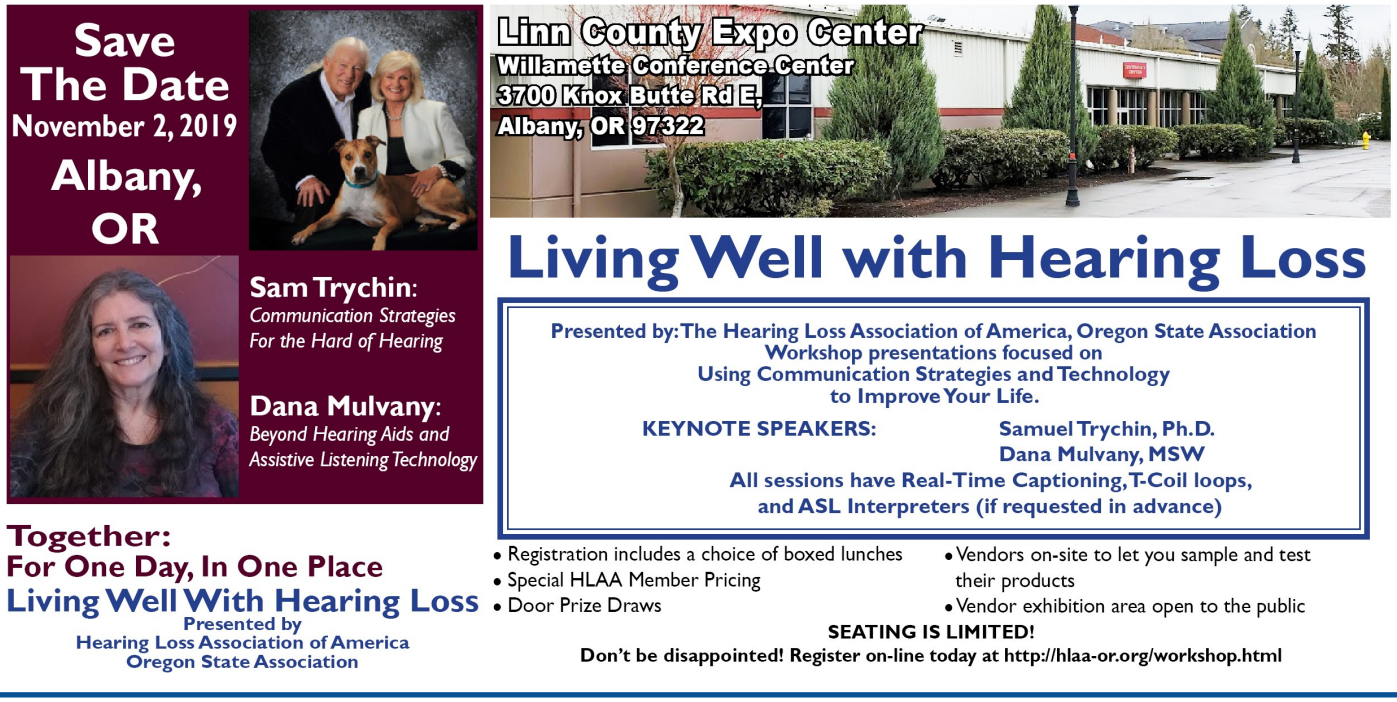

Local HLAA Meetings & Resources

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) and induction (hearing) loop.
Larry: **360-656-6457** or ***lwonnacott@symmetryfunds.com***
Website: ***www.hearingloss-whatcom.org***

Looking for a meeting?

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***

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Our E-news e-mails, delivered twice a 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.

Please inform us of any upcoming accessible events as early as possible so we may add them to this resource.

Subscribe to our FREE the HLAA-WA E-News and other HLAA-WA announcements *http://eepurl.com/b3_Ko9*.

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***.

HLAA national convention information at ***https://www.hearingloss.org/programs-events/convention/***.

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

HLAA Hearing Life magazine summaries online at ***https://www.hearingloss.org/news-media/hearing-life/***.

Get HLAA's monthly electronic newsletter at ***https://www.hearingloss.org/news-media/e-news/***.

Restaurant Noise *cont. from page 3*

conversation, as opposed to going in thinking I will just sit in quiet isolation while eating my food.

Many hearing aids can now be paired with remote microphones, and many come with a smartphone app to control the clip-on microphone and many hearing aid features. I'm often surprised how few people with hearing loss use remote microphones. I urge people to talk to their hearing health professional about making a microphone a key part of choosing their hearing aids, rather than an afterthought.

But Please Take Noise Off the Menu

But what are the restaurants doing to help? Technology can sometimes mitigate hearing challenges, but the real solution is to reduce the noise. There's a long list of steps a restaurant can take to reduce the noise level.

The Americans with Disabilities Act identifies restaurants as places which must accommodate people with disabilities. But the ADA doesn't specify what noise level prevents a restaurant patron with hearing loss from having "full participation and equal access." I don't think that lawsuits or regulations will soon solve the restaurant noise problem.

Growing awareness that noise disturbs and drives away customers, on the other hand, is something to which restaurants will respond. I've learned to communicate my hearing needs in selecting a place to eat or when I walk into a restaurant. Friends and relatives without hearing loss often ask for a quiet table before I open my mouth to do so, and even ask for music to be turned down. Or they complain to the staff that the restaurant is REALLY loud. My microphone frequently prompts questions from new friends, servers and even people at other tables. Everybody is curious and/or has a relative or friend with hearing loss.

Maybe restaurants will do something to dampen the noise if enough patrons ask for something, say something or start avoiding places that are too loud.

1. "***For those with hearing impairments, restaurant noise isn't just an irritation. It's discrimination***,"

(***https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/food/for-those-with-hearing-impairments-restaurant-noise-isnt-just-an-irritation-its-discrimination/2019/06/14/0223d722-8def-11e9-adf3-f70f78c156e8_story.html?d=IwAR18vcfWvFVwv67DWoLweheXKNLhuelsOh181Jdg5yYHJaK0Agu0DmxDBF8&noredirect=on&utm_term=.345a4dcf1863***)●

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Creeping Isolation *cont. from page 1*

For a long time, my hearing issue was a curiosity—I didn't sense much dysfunction. But eventually I began accusing my wife of mumbling, although she said she spoke clearly, and I began missing things said in meetings at work.

An audiologist confirmed that my high frequency hearing was poor. Numbers don't lie—it was time for hearing aids. About nine years ago, at the age of 55, I got my first set. I remember walking outside for a test run and being amazed that I could hear the birds singing!

But the story I want to tell isn't about technology—it's about psychology. It's a story I'd like to tell all my hearing-normal friends and family. My gradual loss of hearing and reliance on hearing aids put me in a place I had never expected: it started putting a great big bubble around me. Creeping hearing loss came hand-in-hand with creeping isolation.

It took longer to spot the bubble than it did the hearing loss. But, looking back, I see the pattern clearly now. In a meeting, someone made a joke, and everyone laughed, except me—I couldn't hear the punch line. TV was frustrating—everyone mumbled behind roaring music. My wife and I stopped watching movies together. I started missing and misunderstanding what was going on in meetings, parties or other gatherings. I could rarely track a conversation in a room filled with voices.

It got worse. It was hard to place an order at a fast-food place—young people with high voices spoke quickly and were difficult to understand. If I asked them to repeat themselves, they'd say it the same way. I stopped using the phone—it was just too frustrating—so I turned to texting and chats.

The mutual frustration of my not understanding my wife has put stress on our relationship. But, worst of all, my grandchildren run to me and say something immensely important, and I haven't a clue. I'm only half of a grandpa—seen but unable to hear.

Hearing aids have helped a lot, but they don't solve every problem. So much depends on individual situations and on how people talk. People talk softly and fast, or drop their voice for the punch line of a joke. People talk looking away from me or at each other. People lean over to whisper during meetings.

It strikes me as ironic that I learned how to project my voice in high school theatre, but most people, especially

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Creeping Isolation *cont. from page 6*

those who have normal hearing, don't seem to think much about how they speak.

The realization that a bubble of isolation has been growing around me has forced me to confront my reality. Like so many aspects of an aging body, I can't operate on autopilot like I did when I was young. I've had to choose between working on adapting, or just accepting my isolation.

Happily, our society is more and more accepting of disability and willing to learn how to communicate with people with hearing loss. I'm getting braver about asking people to speak a bit louder in meetings. This request is usually acknowledged with smiles and nods. I've talked to my grandchildren about my hearing and shown them my hearing aids. They were curious about them and now understand why I asked them to talk more slowly.

Thanks to help from Cynthia Stewart of HLAA-WA, I've learned about better tools and how to get the support I need. She helped me work with a Costco technician to get a clip-on microphone that connects to my Kirkland brand hearing aids via Bluetooth. I can also connect the microphone to my cell phone and hear phone calls or stream other content directly to my hearing aids, and the microphone contains a telecoil, enabling me to connect to hearing loop systems as well.

Cynthia also advised me how to request reasonable accommodations for my State-sponsored work meetings. As a result, the State's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing now provides an FM system for the meetings and I use a receiver, neck loop and my microphone's telecoil to hear in my meetings. Meeting coordinators set up the system for me—they have been congenial and supportive. This is progress—the bubble is beginning to shrink!

Still, I wish more people understood how hearing impairment creates a bubble of isolation. I wish they understood that how they speak affects other people. I'd like people to not give up on me—to keep trying if I'm having trouble and not assume that poor hearing is like being stupid!

I suspect all this is familiar to many people reading this article. I'm still learning what it means. Reaching out for knowledge and developing my own coping strategies has empowered me to better adapt to my declining hearing.

I'll keep sharing my story with my hearing-normal friends and family so they can help make the creeping isolation go away.●

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Seen and Heard *cont. from page 3*

Aging and Disability Services also notes that accommodations for people with these conditions often are provided in a haphazard, reactive way focused on meeting minimum legal requirements rather than on achieving full inclusion and universal access. While many organizations try to be welcoming and inclusive, they too often lack the knowledge needed to plan events and meetings that are accessible to people of all ages and all abilities.

At the May 30 forum, in the Bertha Knight Landes room at Seattle City Hall, there were descriptions and demonstrations of the accommodations available for people with disabilities.

For the benefit of people with hearing loss, the forum was held in a room with a hearing loop, captioning (CART) was provided, and assistive listening devices were available for people without hearing aids. ASL interpreters were available, including a tactile ASL interpreter.

HLAA-WA was honored to be asked to co-sponsor the event and to discuss the problems that people with hearing loss often encounter at events where accommodations are not adequate.

Cynthia Stewart, HLAA-WA President, spoke about the challenges of difficult listening environments and the limitations of hearing aids in those environments. She noted the many ways meetings can be made more hearing-friendly, including through the use of various forms of assistive technology.

Cynthia used her personal experiences to illustrate how poor acoustics in a crowded room and the absence of adequate hearing accommodations can make an event nearly useless to participants, even those without hearing loss.

The May 30 forum was impressive, also, for how many different types of disabilities were discussed. In addition to hearing loss, accommodations were addressed for people who are blind/deaf/deaf-blind; use wheelchairs/mobility aids; have autism, cerebral palsy; and other conditions that might require special attention.

The City of Seattle Guide can be accessed at ***http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/AgeFriendly/AccessibleEventsMeetings-Guide_revNov2018.pdf***.

A video of the forum is available online as well. Watch it at ***https://www.seattlechannel.org/videos?videoid=x105219***. ●

Diana Thompson Award *cont. from page 1*

focusing on food security, transportation, health & wellness and insurance & legal assistance services. Among its well-known services are "Meals on Wheels," "Mobile Market" and "Hyde Shuttles."

There were 49 nominees for the Inspire Positive Aging Awards, and eight persons received awards. Diana noted, "All award nominees were between ages 62 and 92, which emphasizes that as we grow older we can continue to make worthwhile contributions to the community and to the lives of other persons."

Diana combines her great interest in issues and barriers affecting older adults with her personal experience of hearing loss. Her persistent work on recent HLAA-WA advocacy priorities has included leadership and advocacy in relation to restoration of hearing aid coverage for adults under Washington State's Medicaid plan and passage of legislation mandating that hearing health professionals fully inform clients about the uses and benefits of hearing assistive technology.

In her acceptance remarks, Diana used the example of her work on restoration of hearing aid coverage for adults under Medicaid to explain the challenges involved in advocacy work. She commented on the need to obtain support from multiple legislators and legislative committees, and from other organizations interested in issues affecting seniors and people with hearing loss.

Diana also noted the challenges of making numerous trips to Olympia, sometimes on short notice, and of testifying to legislative committees in venues where hearing assistive equipment sometimes was not available.

Diana also has represented HLAA-WA, and all people with hearing loss, in providing input into the development of "Washington State's Plan to Address Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias" and the related "Dementia Action Collaborative," ensuring that hearing loss is considered and included when broad plans are developed for assisting older adults.

HLAA-WA Past President Karen Utter said, "For many years now, Diana Thompson has been a foundational researcher and support person for so many of our HLAA projects and board programs."

Karen added, "As a retired attorney, Diana has shared her precision research skills to gather information that helps us to form the policies that HLAA-WA has supported."

The Inspire Positive Aging Awards Luncheon, held at the Bellevue Hilton Hotel, attracted a large group of people connected with Sound Generations and with the community of older adults in King County.

HLAA-WA Director of Advocacy Cheri Perazzoli, sponsored a table at the event and HLAA-WA provided information about HLAA and hearing loss to attendees at an information table.

In addition to Cheri Perazzoli, HLAA-WA board members Sandra Bunning, Karen Utter and Warren Weissman attended the event and were delighted to clap vigorously when it was announced that Diana had been selected as the deserving recipient of the Advocacy & Activism Award.●

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Please visit:

https://www.hearingloss.org/hearing-help/communities/veterans/

HLAA Convention *cont. from page 1*

so deep in content and skills (e.g. technology, research, advocacy, social) and so vast in scope (e.g. medicine, work, school) that there is no way one can learn all about any of these things at one convention.

I also learned that there are "master gardeners" who give up their convention session time in order to listen to and advise attendees and make it a good experience for all. Many attendees had their own horror stories and advocacy stories to tell, and questions to ask.

The Convention sessions I attended had the importance of advocacy as a common thread: self-advocacy and advocacy for loved ones. Outside of the convention sessions, I spent some time in the Exhibit Hall, where I experimented with technology and practiced ASL at the Gallaudet University table.

I also met and spent some time with fellow Washington State HLAA members. They encouraged me to go to the Saturday evening event, overriding my excuses. So, I bought a dress and dress shoes at the nearby Goodwill store for less than $13.00, and then donated some things for which I no longer had room in my luggage.

While walking back via a different route, I saw a painting on a wall that read, "Be stronger than your excuses." Something told me I wasn't alone. I went to the event and enjoyed the delicious food, great customer service and people.

I returned home with useful knowledge about a variety of topics related to hearing loss. I also brought home a plan of action and some new tools to address my hearing loss, a greater feeling of connectedness, and free convention stuff. I got. I gave. I conquered.

I'm glad I went. So plan to go to your first HLAA convention next year. Be sure to have a plan B, but you won't need it!●

More Feedback About Convention 2019—Start Planning for Convention2020

Sound Waves gathered some additional thoughts from members of the Washington State delegation to the 2019 HLAA Convention.

Carolyn Odio told us that the first thing that jumped out at her was the thoroughness of the communication modes—real-time captioning, hearing loops and sign language interpretation in each session! She was very inspired and plans to bring that to the meetings she organizes back home.

Carolyn attended sessions primarily in the Hearing Assistive Technology track, but noted that the track on genetics indicated the "cutting edge" nature of the convention.

She also particularly enjoyed the "demo room" demonstration of Microsoft Translator (a smartphone application). The user speaks into their smartphone, in their preferred language, and what they say is converted to text and translated into multiple languages. The output is displayed on the user's smartphone, in their desired language, in real time!

Long-time HLAA member Bob Branigin, from Seattle, has been to every HLAA annual convention since they began in 1984, and was at the 2019 Convention.

Bob remarked on how much he enjoys talking to people at the convention, but he said the turnout was a little disappointing this time, perhaps because it's hard to get to Rochester. Bob said he hopes that next year's HLAA convention, which will be in New Orleans, will be easier for him to get to, and he plans to once again be at the convention.

Also attending the Convention from Washington State were HLAA-WA Board members Cheri Perazzoli, Glenda Philio, Cynthia Stewart and Larry Wonnacott, as well as HLAA members Ed Friant, Don Gischer, Jacqui Metzger, Diana Thompson and Sandra Vidgoff.

Also in attendance were Steve Peck of the Washington State Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and Irene Stewart of Seattle-King County Aging and Disability Services.

———***Sound Waves***

2018 HLAA-WA Board of Trustees

We are an extension of the Hearing Loss Association of America (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***.

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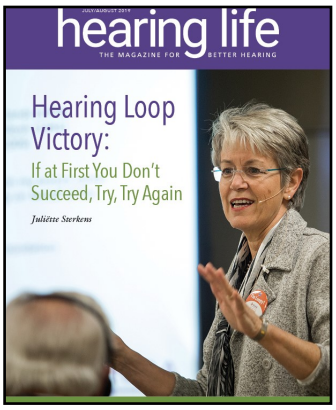

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To open the world of communication to people with hearing loss by providing information, education, support and advocacy.

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Our donors made GiveBIG 2019 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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