

Hearing loss need not keep church goers at home

Churches are places where people come to learn, be inspired, and connect with their community. For many people, these spaces are also a place of sanctuary. Unfortunately, for those who are hard of hearing, attending church or a house of worship can be difficult without help with hearing loss.

It's important — if churches have the money in their budget — to get the best assistive listening devices they can afford to help everyone enjoy the experience equally.

Although public address (PA) systems can be helpful, they are not enough to meet the needs of those with hearing loss. PA systems amplify sound overall, which can be beneficial for everyone. However, people with hearing loss often need a more customized solution.

This is where assistive listening devices come in. ALDs provide a way to amplify sound

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Americans with Disabilities marks 32 years

Resources

On July 26, the Hearing Loss Association of America marked the 32nd anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act by issuing a call for more progress on accessible communication.

HLAA participated in the passage of the landmark 1990 civil rights legislation, requiring equal access for people with disabilities in public spaces, jobs, schools, transportation, and government services.

HLAA was instrumental in getting accessible communications, such as captioning and assistive listening systems, included in the ADA over three decades ago, and still advocates on behalf of the 48 million Americans who have hearing loss. HLAA wants people with hearing loss to understand their rights by visiting hearingloss.org/KnowYourRights.

“There’s no question that accessibility has improved over the last 32 years, but there’s a long way to go, especially when it comes to accessibility for invisible disabilities like hearing loss,” says Barbara Kelley, executive director of HLAA. “We’ve become accustomed to looking for curb cutouts and wheelchair-accessible elevators, but many



Danny Nee for Unsplash

people don’t know that those same public places are also required to have assistive listening systems for people with hearing loss,” she explains.

Public places like movie theatres, lecture halls, stadiums — and anywhere with a public address system — are required to provide access to special listening systems and devices for patrons with hearing loss, but according to HLAA, equipment is often missing, broken or non-existent.

Another area that often lacks accessibility is the workplace.

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I'M ALL EARS ...

Editorial by Jeanne Fenimore Levy



Jeanne is a Hillsboro, Ore., resident who lost a significant portion of her hearing in the 1970s and despaired for her future. Hearing aids helped, though, and eventually she realized that coping with hearing loss was possible and, in fact, the only way to go.

It's summer, and resurgence of the latest Covid variant still keeps many of us home and alone.

My husband and I did get to visit with California friends and relatives who traveled up to Oregon. We enjoyed that, for they were very easy-going and easy to please — and two are trained chefs. There is nothing like having professionally cooked and plated food. Everything tasted just a little bit better!

One of our visitors was considering hearing aids — much to the delight of his family who needed to repeat their words often.

Of course, my husband and I had lots of advice for him since we recently got our new aids. I hope he does take the leap and get some help for his hearing.

In August, over-the-counter hearing aids were approved at last. AARP fought for the bipartisan law, written by Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) and

Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), that required the FDA to issue these regulations.

“Giving people with mild to moderate hearing loss access to affordable hearing aids is an important step to ensure their health and quality of life,” said Nancy LeaMond, AARP’s executive vice president and chief advocacy and engagement officer. “For many Americans, the high cost of prescription hearing aids puts them out of reach, increasing their risk of isolation, depression and other health issues. Today’s rule could help millions.”

On the hearingloss.org website you can read more about the aids that will be available. It’s expected that the new over-the-counter class of hearing aids — recommended only for adults with mild to moderate hearing loss — will be significantly less expensive.

If cost has been the deciding issue for you on whether or not to purchase hearing aids, I hope this good news will help you get them. Many hearing aid providers have payment plans to help with the cost.

I have enjoyed writing to you in each newsletter — sharing a few observations and passing on information that I hope helps you. However, I will be moving on to other projects and will no longer take care of the newsletter.

We hope to find someone else to take my place. If you have the time, perhaps it will be you?

Check out the article on page 6.

Meanwhile, stay well and take care of your ears. ■

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HEAR IT IS! #90

Published quarterly by the HAAA, Oregon State Association, Inc., P.O. Box 22501, Eugene, OR 97402.

Hear It Is! will regularly print your hearing loss-

related stories — personal experiences, coping strategies, and evaluations of technology are welcomed. Maximum word count is 500 words.

Article contributions should be made to the editor at info@

hearinglossOR.org.

For advertising information and rates, contact info@hearinglossOR.org.

Website:

<https://www.hlaa-or.org/>. ■

ADA anniversary, *continued from page 1*

A recent survey of people with hearing loss conducted by HLAA found 44 percent reported accessibility issues on the job, which can lead to frustration, isolation, and job loss. Accessible communication in health care is also a common and serious problem, according to HLAA.

“The ADA requires both employers and health care providers to provide accessible listening systems or captioning to people with hearing loss on request, but these systems are often missing or inadequate,” says Lise Hamlin, HLAA’s director of public policy. She added, “You can imagine the dangers of not fully understanding your doctor’s instructions because your telehealth appointment doesn’t have captions available, or you were unable to get the proper listening device in the emergency room to know what’s happening to a loved one.”

HLAA notes access doesn’t always mean providing a sign language interpreter, since many who have hearing loss don’t use American Sign Language. Technology — like hearing loop systems that feed into hearing aids or amplifying receivers, or real-time captioning that provides the text of the spoken word — may be needed instead.

HLAA urges people to learn what accommodations are available, by visiting hearingloss.org/KnowYourRights, and take steps to file a complaint if they’re not provided.

After 32 years, it’s time to demand more. All people with disabilities, deserve to have equal access. ■



Photo by Maxime on Unsplash

2022 HLAA board meetings

You are invited to attend and participate in the quarterly meetings of the Hearing Loss Association of Oregon

board. The next meeting is Oct. 1. Meetings are held on Zoom. To confirm meeting dates and times, please contact John Hood-Fysh, jhoodfysh@gmail.com or send email to info@hearinglossOR.org. You can also telephone 1-800-413-0691. Please leave a message.

Listening help where you worship, *continued from page 1*

directly to the person with hearing loss, which can make a big difference in their ability to hear and participate.

Assistive listening devices are tools that amplify sound to make it easier for people with hearing loss to hear. There is a variety of ALDs available, each with its own set of features.

The most common types of

ALDs include: personal amplifiers, FM systems, infrared systems, and loop systems. worship.

With a little research, your church’s board will find out which system may be right for your congregation. You can also look for a church currently using a hearing loop. ■

DISCLAIMER

Opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual author and are not necessarily those of HLAA-OR. Mention of products and services does not mean endorsement, nor should any exclusion actually indicate disapproval.

Personal experiences and diverse opinions related to hearing loss are welcome for publication and should be mailed to HLAA Oregon, P.O. Box 22501, Eugene, OR 97402; email: info@hearinglossOR.org.

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HLAA is one organization – national office, state offices and associations, and HLAA chapters – all working to open the world of communication to people with hearing loss through information, education, support and advocacy.

Membership dues are: individual, \$45 per year; and a couple/family is \$55. Professionals and nonprofits pay \$80. Membership includes the award-winning bimonthly magazine, *Hearing Life*.

Write to HLAA, 7910 Woodmont Ave., Ste. 1200, Bethesda, MD 20814. Or you may call 301/657-2248 (voice), 301/913-9413 (fax) or online at www.hearingloss.org.

Join and become a hearing advocate.

“You will never plow a field if you only turn it over in your mind.”
– Irish Proverb

ODHHS aids Oregonians with hearing loss

<https://bit.ly/3dMtEzn>

Oregon Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (ODHHS) is a resource for all Oregonians, and their families, to improve quality of life.

The staff offers advice, support, advocacy and referrals to anyone needing to meet the needs of Deaf and hard of hearing people in Oregon.

Information and referral: The ODHHS staff works to make state services and programs friendly and accessible to Deaf and hard of hearing Oregonians and their families. We connect you with resources, tools and information.

Accommodations for services: Employees of public agencies (state, county, city and municipal) can request ASL interpreters or CART captioning through ODHHS.

Members of the public may request ASL interpreters or CART by contacting the state,

county, city or municipality providing the services.

They want to hear from you if you encounter barriers.

Community Needs Assessment: Many of the issues they address are outlined in depth in a Community Needs Assessment that was completed in 2016.

- They offer advice and refer you to services;
- They partner with public services and programs to make them more accessible; and
- They will work to refer you to people or organizations that provide services.

Please note that ODHHS can not directly provide these services.

From their website: “Our goals are ambitious, and our partnership with our stakeholders is critical to our success.”



Book & movie you may enjoy

Wonderstruck

A book and a movie by Brian Selznik about two children separated by 50 years. In 1927, Rose searches for a mysterious actress whose life she chronicles in her scrapbook; in 1977, Ben longs for the father he has never known.

Ben finds a puzzling clue in his mother’s room, and Rose reads an enticing headline in the newspaper. Both children have hearing loss.

Ben’s story is told entirely with words, while Rose’s story, set fifty years earlier, is told entirely with pictures. The two stories weave back and forth before ultimately coming together.

The book contains over 460 pages of original artwork. The movie, available on Amazon Prime, features well known actors.



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For more information:

- www.oregonrelay.com
- SprintTRSCustServ@sprint.com (Email)
- 800-676-3777 (TTY / Voice)
- 877-877-3291 (Fax)
- 877-787-1989 (Speech-disabled)
- 866-931-9027 (Voice Carry-Over)
- 800-676-4290 (español)



Your opportunity to be part of HLAA-OR

We have openings for volunteer positions in the Oregon chapter of Hearing Loss Association of America.

There are board positions — vice president and a role for someone savvy in social media. We also are seeking a business editor who stays in contact with our advertisers.

Our organization has lost three valuable volunteers and we would really like to find some new volunteers who either have hearing loss, know someone with hearing loss, or feel drawn to commit to helping an organization with our goals.

There is no special training needed to serve on the board, other than committing to attending quarterly meetings: four a year.

Currently, meetings are held online. Whether in person or online, there are captions available to make sure all members and guests are able to understand.

If you have experience in writing or publishing newsletters, writing grants, making social media posts for organizations, keeping orderly notes as a secretary of an organization, or just want to help others who have hearing loss,

this could be a great fit for your skills.

You can email info@hearinglossOR.org to connect with our president, John Hood-Fysh, or call 1-800-413-0691 to leave a message.

Contact HLAA-OR, P.O. Box 22501, Eugene, OR 97402; or email: info@hearinglossOR.org.



DID YOU KNOW?

1 in 3 people over the age of 60 have hearing loss.

HEARING LOSS IS ABOUT **2X** AS COMMON IN ADULTS with diabetes.

20% A recent study suggests that for every 10 DB LOSS in your hearing, your risk of Alzheimer's increases by 20%.

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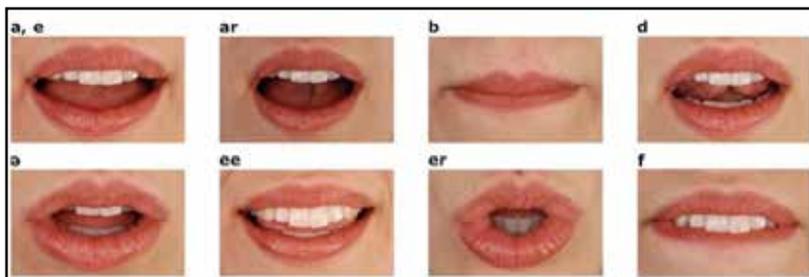
For the 17 percent of American adults — or 36 million people — who live with hearing loss, navigating daily life can be an exhausting. Older adults with hearing loss in particular often find noisy situations overwhelming and may avoid gatherings they once enjoyed, risking isolation and even cognitive decline.

Researchers from Columbian College of Arts and Sciences Department of Speech, Language and Hearing Science are helping adults with hearing loss join the conversation through novel approaches to lipreading training.

Nicole Jordan, clinical coordinator of audiology — are stressing lipreading as a vital component for improving audiovisual speech recognition amid noise.

Through a pair of studies — funded by the National Institutes of Health — the team is conducting remote lipreading training with more than 200 people with hearing loss. The team introduces new strategies along with their own training software.

Their approach emphasizes the relationship between seeing and hearing in communication, drawing in part from cognitive neuro-



Scientists are combining knowledge from cognitive neuroscience — neuroscience is the scientific study of the nervous system (the brain, spinal cord, and peripheral nervous system) and its functions — with real-life lessons from their lipreading training sessions.

A team of experts — Lynne E. Bernstein, professor of speech, language, and hearing science; Silvio P. Eberhardt, associate research professor; Edward T. Auer, associate research professor; and

science studies led by Bernstein and Auer that track visual speech

as a complex process across the visual, auditory and language processing areas of the brain. “It is now acknowledged more widely that there are two [speech processing] pathways — one through the ears and one through the eyes,” Bernstein said.

Still, lipreading presents significant challenges.

“Lipreading ability is not an inborn trait,” Bernstein said. Instead, the team’s findings suggest that when it’s properly taught, lipreading can help people with

hearing loss — as well as people with normal hearing — use both listening and looking skills to bolster their ability to communicate.

Seeing the Speaker

The CCAS experts said researchers are often too quick to underestimate the benefits of looking at people when talking, a process that has become even more challenging with the prevalence of pandemic face masks. Even the best hearing aids or cochlear implants have limitations, especially in noisy settings. The researchers said hearing aids can improve speech in noise by 2 or 3 decibels. However, some studies show that visual speech, combined with hearing speech, is functionally equivalent to 12 or more decibels of noise reduction.

“Hearing aids are just that: aids,” Jordan said. “In instances where the hearing aids alone are not enough, lipreading can help bridge the gap between hearing and understanding.” And the pandemic has only heightened the importance of visible speech. People now realize they rely on lipreading and facial expressions more than they thought.

The team’s training uses software to analyze errors and give feedback based on the words the lipreader actually thought the talker said — the “near miss” errors that sound far off but may be surprisingly close to correct.

The team’s other recommendations include tailoring training to different ability levels and varying sample-talkers to showcase numerous vocal tracts and dialects. Just as important, they noted, is acknowledging that learning to effectively lipread is a long-term process but one that can ultimately succeed in the right conditions.



Archer Captioning
Elizabeth Archer | Captioner
ArcherCaptioning@gmail.com
www.ArcherCaptioning.com
503-319-0122

3 Simple Steps to disclosing your hearing loss at work

— by Shari Eberts (<https://bit.ly/3QlwwGt>)

Managing hearing loss in the workplace is not always easy. It takes confidence, which can be elusive for many people, especially in the early days of hearing loss. It certainly was for me.

At HCAA's Convention 2022, I spoke on a panel entitled: Hearing Loss, Workplace Inclusion and Career Success. There are many topics related to successfully managing hearing loss in the workplace, but I focused my talk on disclosure. Should you disclose? When? How? I hoped the attendees might learn from my mistakes. **Disclose your hearing loss with confidence.**

I first noticed my hearing loss in my mid-20s, but my journey started well before as I watched my father struggle with his own hearing issues. He was highly stigmatized by it and would do almost anything to keep it a secret, even growing his hair long over his ears well after it was fashionable. So, when I first discovered my own hearing loss, I hid it, following in his footsteps — especially at work.

Before my hearing loss advocacy work, I spent 20 years in the finance and consulting industries. For most of that time, my hearing loss was a secret. I told only my closest colleagues, but even then, I don't think they really understood how difficult it was for me to hear in certain situations. I downplayed it so I wouldn't look weak or ineffective. Looking back, I wish I had been more open.

Why you should disclose your hearing loss at work.

All the years I worked in the financial industry, I wore hearing aids. Because of them, I performed well at my job and even got promoted. Why then didn't I disclose my hearing loss? Did I think that my achievements would be erased because I had done all of them with small technological assistants in my ears? With hindsight, my worries seem rather silly.

Does this mean everyone should disclose their hearing loss at work? In most cases, I believe the answer is "Yes." And here is why:

1. Strong performance speaks for itself —

If you have an existing track record of good performance in your role, disclosing your hearing issues will not change your hard-won reputation. Assuming your hearing issues are not new, your strong work will continue, and perhaps improve with the added benefit of disclosure.

2. Possibility of easy fixes —

Disclosing your hearing loss allows for accommodation. A different seating arrangement at meetings or a better conference room speakerphone might make you an even more productive worker. Coming clean allows you to ask for the assistance you need and to be less fearful when asking for a repeat or clarification.

3. Authenticity is rewarded —

Once I began disclosing my hearing issues, I was amazed how many people



made confession of their own. Sharing my

vulnerabilities allowed others to do the same, boosting morale for everyone.

4. Less stress —

Depending on the degree of your hearing loss, your co-workers may already suspect you have a hearing problem or worse, they may think you are not smart or are a poor listener. When people know you have a hearing loss, it relieves the pressure of having to hear everything perfectly.

5. Times are changing —

Millennials and subsequent generations are more comfortable with disabilities. Many of their peers used accommodations on tests for learning differences. This was not stigmatized but instead seen as a normal pattern of behavior. They carried this view into the workplace.

6. The law is on our side —

Under the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) employers must provide "reasonable accommodations" for employees with hearing loss, as long as it does not cause "undue

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Do you qualify for a discount?

Oregon Lifeline is a federal and state government program that provides a discount of up to \$12.75 on phone or high-speed internet service with participating companies for qualifying low-income households.

Apply if you receive:

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
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email: puc.rspf@state.or.us



Chapters in Oregon

Local chapter meetings are open to all. Check ahead of time, due to Covid 19. Family, friends, and professionals are encouraged to attend and become involved.

We believe in education — for those who hear well and those who cannot — so that both may understand the causes, challenges, and possible remedies

for hearing loss. At our meetings, you'll find a comfortable place where hearing loss is accepted and not a problem. Many people report that being a part of a Hearing Loss Assoc. group has made a major difference in their lives.

Below are some of the current chapters and contact people in Oregon. ■

HAAA-Portland: We have virtual meetings monthly on the third Saturday at 10 am using Zoom. Our meetings are captioned using both CART and ASR. To be notified of every meeting, please email us at hlaportland@gmail.com and ask to be on our newsletter email list. Contact Mark Foster, president; email: hlaportland@gmail.com. Write P.O. Box 2112, Portland, OR 97208-2112; www.hlaa-or.org/portland-chapter.html.

HAAA of Lane County meets quarterly: second Thursday in March, June, Sept., and Dec., at 7 p.m. at the Hilyard Community Center, 2580 Hilyard St., Eugene. Please check to see if Covid 19 infections mandate otherwise. Contact Clark Anderson — clarkoa@msn.com
Mail: P.O. Box 22501, Eugene, OR 97402.



HLAA 2023 convention set

The Hearing Loss Association of America's 2023 Convention will be held at the New Orleans Marriott in New Orleans, LA, June 29- July 1, 2023.

Early-bird registration opens Friday, Dec. 2. Register by Friday, March 3, 2023 for best convention rates.

The call for papers for the 2023 convention educational workshops opens on Friday, Sept. 16. The deadline to submit a paper is Friday, Dec. 9.

Follow us on social media: #hlaa2023.

Questions about the HAAA Convention? Email Amanda Watson at convention@hearingloss.org.

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hardship” which is defined as significant difficulty or expense. Reasonable accommodations could include things like captioned phones, assistive listening devices, or work area adjustments like a change in seating location. Step one is asking for the help that we need.

How to disclose your hearing loss at work—

Hopefully by now you are convinced that you should let your colleagues know about your hearing loss. But how do you do it? Follow three simple steps.

1. Disclose with confidence—

There is no need to apologize or feel guilty about your hearing loss. Speak with confidence and others will see that your job performance will not be negatively impacted. If your colleagues are worried about your ability to do your job, point to your existing track record as evidence of your abilities.

2. Ask specifically for what need—

Letting others know about your hearing loss is just informing them of a fact. The more important bit is letting them know what you need from them to enhance communication. Do your research in advance so you can make suggestions, such as using ASR captions for all Zoom calls or choosing a better seating arrangement for in-person meetings.

3. Express gratitude—

Good team work is to be appreciated. Be sure to thank your colleagues for the communication assistance they provide. And they will thank you for including them in your success.

Once you disclose, you can spend your energy on performing well at your job rather than keeping unnecessary secrets. And what a relief that is.

For more Workplace Hearing Hacks, read *Hear & Beyond: Live Skillfully with Hearing Loss*.

Readers, do you disclose your hearing loss at work?





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[] Enclosed is my contribution of \$_____ to support the Hearing Loss Association outreach programs in Oregon. Contributions will be acknowledged in the next issue.

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[] I cannot contribute but would like to receive the newsletter.

[] I want to join **Hearing Loss Association of America**, the National Organization. Please enroll me as a member. I'm including my membership fee (see page 4 for fee schedule).

Or you can sign up online at www.hlaa-or.org. Click "membership," then "application."

Hearing Loss Association of America, Oregon State Association, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) charity and depends on donations and grants. All personnel are volunteers. Please send your donation to support our efforts to HLAA, Oregon State Association, P.O. Box 22501, Eugene, OR 97402.