

Oregon DMV explains new option for deaf or hard of hearing drivers

An Oregon resident who is deaf or hard of hearing may voluntarily apply to have the International Symbol of Access for Hearing Loss added to their driver license, driver permit, or identification card. The deaf or hard of hearing designation will also be visible to law enforcement through the DMV record.

The designation can also be added to a vehicle registration to indicate that the registered owner or another person operating the vehicle may be deaf or hard of hearing.

The designation can be added at any time by paying to replace your existing license/ID/permit or vehicle registration online through DMV2U.oregon.gov or at a DMV office or by selecting the designation at your initial issuance. The designation will automatically appear on subsequent renewals. It will not automatically

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Bridges Oregon announces \$43,000 in grants Resources for deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing Oregonians

Last year, in 2021, Bridges became the first and only linguistic and culturally responsive nonprofit in Oregon to provide advocacy and accompaniment services to victims and survivors who are Deaf, DeafBlind, or Hard-of-Hearing.

This year, the following organizations have awarded grants to Bridges:

- Crime Victim and Survivor Services, through the Oregon Department of Justice, awarded \$22,000 Survivor Housing Funds. The purpose of SHF is to help survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, dating violence, and human trafficking to maintain and access safe permanent housing. This project ends on June 30, 2023.

- The Fair Housing Council of Oregon awarded \$15,000 with a mission to end illegal housing discrimination and ensure equal access to housing through education and enforcement of fair housing laws. (There is a possibility for additional funding.) This project ends on June 30, 2022, and we are eligible for the next fiscal cycle.

- Oregon Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence awarded \$6,000 to engage with Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing communities on a digital storytelling project. Stories will address topics around social justice, collective liberation, and community activism. This project ends on June 30, 2022.

The awarded grants will support the mission of Bridges Oregon in



Photo - Sincerely Media on Unsplash

the following ways:

The funding from CVSSD will enhance Bridges Oregon's financial support toward reducing barriers to survivors' housing stability.

The funding from the Fair Housing Council of Oregon will allow our A5 Interpreting Services to provide accommodations for Deaf, DeafBlind, or Hard of Hearing clients to obtain housing or stay in stable housing. This funding also can be used to provide financial assistance for clients to receive reasonable modifications in the clients' homes and ensure clients stay safe through equal access in their home environments.

Through funding, OCADSV will partner with Bridges Oregon to advertise and recruit four to seven participants and develop a digital story project. Through this partnership, Bridges Oregon will coordinate and host a webinar to

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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.

When I wrote here in the Winter 2021 issue, I was shopping for new hearing aids. I now have them. They are different than my last pair in two major ways. First, the receiver fits directly in my ear canal with a tiny, thin tube (receiver wire) connected to the “behind the ear” device. There is no ear piece and there are two microphones on the aid itself.

Second, the aids are rechargeable and can be programmed by an app on my smart phone. I can control the volume, obscure background noises, or center in on the speaker’s voice.

My Medicare insurance plan did not cover much of the cost for aids, so I used my savings to pay for them. I think I got a good, fair deal on them.

They are very comfortable and have improved my life in many ways, but nothing is magical. I still have problems **understanding** some people’s speech.

There doesn’t seem to be a cure for this, but if I use the app on my phone or manually increase the volume on my aids, it is better. And there’s always the good, old fashioned “Could you please repeat that.”

I am not going to recommend the brand of hearing aid I bought, or the audiologist — even though he was very knowledgeable and helpful. You will need to do your own research and ask your own questions. **Remember to look for online reviews of practitioners. Ask for explanations if there are complaints.** I found an online scam recently for aids priced at \$58. (If it sounds too good to be true, it’s probably not.) There is also no need to buy from the first provider you meet. If you don’t get a good first impression, try again with someone else.

Ask your own hard-of-hearing friends for their recommendations — both for aids and audiologists — since they have experienced this search first hand.

It’s spring again (even with snow drifts in April. I never doubted it would come, but now, instead of a pandemic, we have a war in Europe to worry about.

Perhaps you have work and family to keep your mind and body busy so you aren’t dwelling too much on this.

Others may find themselves watching the horror on TV and getting depressed. Remember all of the options you have: take a walk in the fresh air, call a friend and arrange an in-person visit, listen to recorded music, make a cup of hot tea and read a new book, or pick up an old hobby or a new one. Stay away from depressing people and news sources. I wish you peace and joy. Stay well.

Contact me by emailing feminismo@gmail.com. Let me know what sort of articles you would like to see in your newsletter. ■

HAAA, Oregon State Association OFFICERS & BOARD MEMBERS

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HEAR IT IS! #89

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

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@](mailto:info@hearinglossOR.org)

hearinglossOR.org.

For advertising information and rates, contact info@hearinglossOR.org. Deadline for Summer 2022, June 1.

Website:

<https://www.hlaa-or.org/>. ■

Bridges Oregon, *continued from page 1*

share the participants' testimonies with the community.

Chad A. Ludwig, Executive Director and founder of Bridges Oregon stated, "We are extremely excited about our funding opportunities to address the disparity in housing and allow the members from the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing communities to share their stories."

Check the website for important links to information.

Mission

Bridges Oregon, Inc., is a nonprofit organization serving Oregonians who are Deaf, DeafBlind, or Hard of Hearing or face other communication barriers. It is in our mission to facilitate equity and inclusiveness and to provide a bridge to opportunities through advocacy, education and communication.



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 at the address listed below.

Unless otherwise noted, readers interested in duplicating or distributing any or all material found in Hear It Is! have our permission to do so. Please credit the source when using such material. HLAA, Oregon State Association, P.O. Box 22501, Eugene, OR 97402; email: info@hearinglossOR.org.

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 meetings are July 9; and 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.

Oregon DMV option, *continued from page 1*

apply on both, so applications will need to be submitted and applicable fees paid to have it appear on either a card or registration. No medical proof is required to add the designation.

So, here's what you must do: Request DMV to add the designation at the time of issuance. Meet all other Oregon require-

ments for a driving privilege or identification card including payment of the original, renewal or replacement fee. Complete the application and indicate that you wish to add the designation; Pay the initial registration or replacement fee.



Above is a mock-up of how the new designation will look on each side of the license.



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.



Thousands of candles can be lighted from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened.

Happiness never decreases by being shared.

Buddha

Books & movies you may enjoy

Hands of My Father: A Hearing Boy, His Deaf Parents, and the Language of Love – Myron Uhlberg
Review by Beth Hemke Shapiro

Heart-tugging and hilarious, Myron Uhlberg’s memoir tells the story of growing up as the hearing son of deaf parents — and his life in a world that he found unaccountably beautiful, even as he longed to escape it.

“Does sound have rhythm?” my father asked. “Does it rise and fall like the ocean? Does it come and go like the wind?”

Such were the kinds of questions that Uhlberg’s deaf father asked him from earliest childhood, in his eternal quest to decipher, and to understand, the elusive nature of sound. Quite a challenge for a young boy, and one of many he would face.

Uhlberg’s first language was American Sign Language, the first sign he learned was “I love you.” But his second language was spoken English — and no sooner did he learn it, than he was called upon to act as his father’s ears and mouth in the

stores and streets of the neighborhood beyond their silent apartment in Brooklyn.

Resentful sometimes of his burdens, he nonetheless adored his parents, who passed on to him their own passionate engagement with life. These remarkable people married and had children at the bottom of the Great Depression — an expression of optimism, and typical of the joy and resilience they were able to summon at even the darkest of times.

From the beaches of Coney Island to Ebbets Field, where he watches his father’s hero Jackie Robinson play ball, from the branch library above the local Chinese restaurant, this is a memoir filled with stories about growing up not just as the child of two deaf people but as a book-loving, mischief-making, tree-climbing kid during the remarkably eventful period that spanned the Depression, the War, and the early fifties. ■

CODA wins big at Oscars!

If you haven’t already heard, *Coda* won the Oscar for Best Picture, and Troy Kotsur won an Oscar for Best Actor. The adapted screenplay also captured an Oscar for writer Sian Heder.

CODA, a 2021 production and coming-of-age comedy-drama film, predominately features Deaf actors. The film stars Emily Jones as the eponymous *CODA* (child of deaf adults), the only hearing member of a deaf family.

An international co-production between the United States, France and Canada, the film was filmed on location in Gloucester, Massachusetts.

CODA had its premiere Jan. 28, 2021, at Sundance Film Festival. Apple acquired distribution rights.

As a *CODA*, Ruby is the only hearing person in her deaf family. When the family’s fishing business is threatened, Ruby finds herself torn between pursuing her love of music at Berklee College of Music and her fear of abandoning her parents.

The film is now streaming on Apple TV. ■

Oregon Relay . . .

Everyone deserves to
communicate by telephone
Just dial 7-1-1



Oregon Relay is a free service that allows individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, or who has a speech disability to place and receive calls through specially trained relay operators. There are several forms of Oregon Relay services, depending on the needs of the individual and the telephone equipment that they use.

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)



Summer activities for building kids' language, literacy, learning

This has been a difficult school year for just about everyone. All families desperately need a reset.

It's not too soon to plan for summer, but give yourself a break! Children build language, literacy, and learning skills through daily activities, so there's no need to complicate things. Rest assured that with a few tips, this can be time well spent.

Here are three everyday activities that kids need more of this summer:

Reading. Use this time to nurture joy in reading. Let kids be in the driver's seat when it comes to choosing what they read so it doesn't feel like work. Many libraries that were closed due to Covid-19 are reopening or offering curbside book pickups and returns. *TIP:* Try introducing different

types of books, from fairy tales to science fiction to poetry.

— Set aside time for independent reading. Read out loud together as well. Even older kids benefit from nightly reading together. Discuss what the story is about, what the characters are feeling, and what your child thinks will come next.

Outdoor play. Hands-on activities, no matter a child's age, are the best way to learn new skills, build vocabularies, and boost learning through the senses.

— Take a nature walk and discuss the sights, smells, and sounds. Plant a garden, outside or in containers: Research your options, shop for materials, and care for your garden daily. Plan a picnic—discuss your menu, where you'll go, and what you hope to see.

Quality time. Sure, many fami-

lies have spent more time together than ever this year, but quantity doesn't always translate to quality.

— Focus on one or two daily opportunities for uninterrupted conversation and bonding.

A morning or evening walk together, a device free dinner (or breakfast or lunch!), or a nightly board game are some ideas.

— Check out these ideas from Family Dinner Project (thefamilydinnerproject.org/) for some great suggestions for conversation starters:

- Which do you think we'll have first: flying cars or jet packs?
- Who was the best inventor of all time?
- If you could invent an app, what would it do?

And have fun!

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%.

Have you had your hearing checked recently?
Schedule your appointment today with the hearing experts
at Pacific EarClinic. (503) 352-2692

Tuality 7th Avenue Medical Plaza
333 SE 7th Avenue, Suite 4150
Hillsboro, OR 97123
PacificEarClinic.org
<https://bit.ly/3jTkj1O>



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Thanks to Our Friends in the
Hearing Loss Association of Oregon
for Your Support!



www.LNSCaptioning.com

May is Better Hearing and Speech Month

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention supports Better Hearing and Speech Month, founded in 1927 by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association.

Each May, this annual event provides an opportunity to raise awareness about hearing and speech problems, and to encourage people to think about their own hearing and get their hearing checked.

Early identification and intervention for hearing loss is important. Many people live with unidentified hearing loss, often failing to realize that they are missing certain sounds and words. Checking one's hearing is the first step toward addressing the issue.

Are you the only one hearing that ringing? If so, it's time to get your doctor to check your hearing.

Protect your hearing! And if you already have hearing loss or are experiencing pain, discomfort, or ringing in the ears, take steps to keep it from getting worse.

According to the World Health Organization's first World Report on Hearing, noise is now being acknowledged as an important public health issue and a top environmental risk faced by the world today.

Over 50 percent of people aged 12–35 years listen to music via personal audio devices at volumes that pose a risk to their hearing.

A rule of thumb for staying safe is to keep the volume below 60 percent. If you frequently use personal audio devices around loud sounds: instead of turning the volume up, consider using noise cancelling earphones or headphones.

Listening through personal audio devices should not exceed 80 dB* (adults) or 75 dB (sensitive users: e.g., children) for 40 hours a week.

Listeners who regularly use portable audio devices can expose themselves to the same level of sound in 15 minutes of music at 100 dB that an industrial worker would receive in an 8-hour day at 85 dB.

The average person is born with about 16,000 hair cells within their inner ear. These cells allow your brain to detect sounds. By the time you notice hearing loss, many hair cells have already been damaged or destroyed. You can lose 30–50 percent of hair cells before changes in your hearing can be measured by a hearing test. Damaged inner ear cells do not grow back.

In addition to damaging hair cells, noise can also damage the auditory nerve that carries in-



formation about sounds to your brain. Early damage may not show up on your hearing test.

Although there is no treatment to restore normal hearing, you can prevent hearing loss from loud sounds. ■

dB: Decibel (Symbol: dB) is a logarithmic unit that indicates ratio or gain. Decibel is used to indicate the level of acoustic waves and electronic signals.



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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, a role for someone savvy in social media, a business editor who stays in contact with our advertisers — and more.

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

Refuting common hearing loss myths

— by Shari Eberts (<https://livingwithhearingloss.com/my-blog/>)

Do all people with hearing loss know sign language? Are they all senior citizens? Can people with hearing loss safely drive a car? Enjoy a movie or the theater? Speak “normally?” Hear perfectly with hearing aids?

Despite how common hearing loss is — over 1.5 billion people globally live with hearing loss according to the World Health Organization — many aspects of it remain shrouded in mystery.

The Hearing Loss Myths

Today’s post aims to refute some common hearing loss myths. But there are others! Feel free to add the ones I’ve missed in the comments.

- Hearing loss only impacts older people

While hearing loss becomes more prevalent in older populations, the majority of people with hearing loss are under age 65. But since ads and other mainstream treatments of hearing loss often focus on older populations, this is not well understood.

Here are the facts:

According to the NIDCD (National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders) 8.5 percent of adults aged 55 to 64 have hearing loss. The rate jumps to 25 percent in adults aged 65-74, and 50 percent in adults aged 75+.

But according to the Better Hearing Institute, **65 percent** of people with hearing loss are **under the age of 65.**

Everyone with hearing loss knows sign language

It is hard to find concrete data on how many people use sign

language to communicate.

Gallaudet University performed a literature review in 2005, finding a wide range of estimates. Their conclusion: the number of American Sign Language users probably falls in the 500,000-2 million people range. Using the high end of the range means that **less than 5 percent** of the 48 million Americans with hearing loss use sign language to communicate.

Nevertheless, sign language is strongly associated with hearing loss. Most mainstream movies and TV shows that feature people with hearing loss highlight sign language — probably because signing is visible and quite beautiful to watch — but it is not representative of the more common hearing loss experience.

Hearing aids work like glasses

Many people expect hearing aids to work like glasses — you put them on and your hearing is restored to normal. Unfortunately, with current technologies, this is far from reality.

As Gael Hannan and I discuss in our book (*Hear & Beyond: Live Skillfully with Hearing Loss*), hearing aids can:

- improve speech comprehension, especially in quiet environments
- reduce (but not eliminate) listening effort and fatigue
- improve personal speech clarity and volume
- assist with sound localization
- mask or reduce the effects of tinnitus
- connect to other devices to enhance communication.

But they cannot:

- deliver sounds as sharply as heard by the natural ear
- read your mind — they amplify all sounds, not just the ones you want to hear
- distinguish among numerous simultaneous speakers
- block out all unwanted background noise.

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HLAA 2022 convention

The HLAA 2022 Convention will be in Tampa, Fla., June 23-25.

HLAA is very excited to be hosting an in-person convention again. This coming year the exhibit hall, workshops, demo presentations, plenary sessions, social events, and Research Symposium will all be held under one roof at the brand new JW Marriott Tampa Water Street.

When you aren’t learning and networking at the “most communication accessible convention for people with hearing loss,” you can explore Tampa’s new Sparkman Wharf area or cruise down the local Riverwalk.

Book your trip now.

Visit the convention page — <https://bit.ly/30s8LMo> — for more information.



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)
- Medicaid
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Veterans or Survivors Pension
- Federal Public Housing Assistance, or
- Your total household income is at or below 135% of the federal poverty guidelines

Proof of eligibility:

You may be required to provide proof that you qualify. Apply online, or print the application at:

www.lifeline.oregon.gov/discount

<https://bit.ly/3xNbA5v>

email: puc.rspf@state.or.us

Call (800) 848-4442

TTY (800) 648-3458 | VP (971) 239-5845

Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Lifeline is non-transferable.

The Lifeline discount is limited to one per household, consisting of either phone (landline or wireless) or high-speed internet service.



Having trouble hearing on the phone?

Specialized telephone equipment or tablets are available at no cost to Oregon residents who have a loss in:

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Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.



Info/application:

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

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.

Links found for hearing loss, cognitive impairment

Age-related hearing loss is one of the most common health disorders of aging, affecting two-thirds of those over age 70. However, few adults are tested for hearing loss, and even fewer are treated. Only 14% of U.S. adults with hearing loss wear hearing aids, the standard treatment.

Because studies show people with age-related hearing loss are more likely to have impaired cognition, it is thought that hearing loss may trigger cognitive decline. But these studies have only examined people diagnosed with hearing loss, which is defined as the inability to hear sounds under 25 decibels (dB).

"Physicians in this field have used 25 dB -- about the loudness of a whisper -- to define the border between normal hearing and mild hearing loss in adults, but this level is arbitrary," says Justin S. Golub, MD. "It has been assumed that cognitive impairment wouldn't begin until people passed this threshold. But no one actually looked at whether this was true."

The researchers looked at data from 6,451 adults (average age 59). Participants underwent hearing and cognitive testing as part of the studies.

Golub and his colleagues found that for every 10 dB decrease in hearing, there was a significant decrease in cognitive ability. Surprisingly, the largest decrease in cognitive ability occurred in those whose hearing was just starting to become impaired.

Hearing loss should be treated right away, this study suggests. "The earlier, the better."

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Quarter Page

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Contact

info@hearinglossOR.org



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all our 2021-2022
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donors. You
make our work
possible.

Myths, continued from page 8

Hearing devices are covered by insurance

People are often surprised to learn that hearing aids are not usually covered by insurance (at least in the United States). Legislation to add hearing aid coverage to Medicare has been discussed in Congress on and off for years, but as of this writing, no definitive progress has been made. On the other hand, cochlear implants are usually covered by most insurance plans (in the United States).

Louder is always better

Once volume reaches a threshold level, speech comprehension is more about clarity than additional volume.

“We Hear You” Takes on Hearing Loss Myths

In the hearing loss documentary, *We Hear You*, we refute many of these myths. Watch a clip from the film here: <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/wehearyou>.

There is a modest fee (\$12.95) to watch* the complete video, with 10 percent going to hearing loss charities.

***Editor’s note:** Perhaps gather a few friends or family members and watch together. We are our own best educators and can teach others what hearing loss is like and how it can be accommodated.



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Hear it is! Oregon SPRING 2022 newsletter

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[] 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.