

HEAR OREGON

IT IS!



SUMMER 2021

ISSUE 86

Oregon legislature funds audio/video service

May 10, 2021

Portland, Oregon — Today, Oregon’s leading statewide disability rights organization applauded the legislature’s passage of \$1.17 million in funding to improve American Sign Language (ASL) and captioning of the legislature’s audio and video service—removing a barrier to participation in the democratic process for members of the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing community.

Disability Rights Oregon advocated to include the funding in HB5016, the budget bill for the legislature.

The Oregon Legislature Audio and Video service allows individuals to watch legislative hearings and other events on their computer or other streaming device and to watch these events from hallways, overflow rooms and the Lobby Message Center in the Capitol.

Individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing had been excluded from using this valuable service.

“Of the people, by the people, for the people” means all of the people. The heart of Oregon’s democracy is opening its doors to members of

Continued on page 3

Looking for a job? Here are tips to deal with hearing loss — from HLAA toolkit

Hearing loss is often called an invisible disability. While hearing loss might affect your ability to function in certain circumstances, it is difficult for others to recognize or acknowledge that fact. People will initially assume that you have complete understanding of what is being said. This is just as true in the workplace as it is in a restaurant or public place.

In the workplace, however, the failure of others to understand that you have this disability can affect your job, career, and livelihood.

Accessibility for people with hearing loss means being able to hear and understand communications and audio signals in whatever form they take: face to face, both one to one and in groups; over the telephone; public address announcements; recorded sound (TV, radio, movies, Internet-based information; amplified sound including public address systems; and alerting and emergency notifications).

■ As a person with a hearing loss in the workplace, it’s **your** responsibility to know what works best for you and communicate that to your employer. They are required to provide adjustments or modifications to enable you to perform successfully.

■ Pay attention to the situations where you do best and what causes the most difficulty — and why.

■ Maximize your residual hearing, using an Assistive Listening

System or Assistive Listening Devices whenever possible.

■ Consider taking speechreading classes to maximize your ability to use visual clues when commu-



Photo by Mapbox on Unsplash

nicating with others.

■ Anticipate problems and seek to minimize them. Do you spend more time on the phone or in meetings? Webinars? Conference calls? What can you do to make each of these situations less stressful?

Revealing Your Hearing Loss

How and when to inform a prospective employer about your hearing loss can be a complex issue. To begin with, an employer is not permitted to ask about your medical condition or require you to take a medical exam before making a job offer. Thus, an employer cannot ask whether you have taken a hearing test that reveals a hearing loss or whether you use assistive devices, including hearing aids.

Therefore, don’t insert the issue of hearing loss in your re-

Continued on page 3

NEWS INSIDE

- Looking for a job? — page 1
- Captioned legislature - page 1
- Board members — page 2
- ‘Best’ hearing aids — page 4
- Captioning — page 7
- NIHL — page 11

WWW.HLAA-OR.ORG/

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.

This summer Oregon residents experienced some very hot days. Three days in June — usually the rain slicker, sweater month — there were temperatures over 100 degrees. During this hot spell we sweltered and sweat.

Hearing aids have a small amount of resistance to such sweating, humidity and condensation, but wipe them down with a dry cloth after you have been warm and sweating; check for moisture bubbles in the tubing; keep aid cleaning tools at hand. Ask your hearing aid provider for more tips.

DID you enjoy the digital newsletter we sent out via email this past spring? (If you are only now realizing you didn't get the spring issue in the mail, please know you had to sign up for it on our website.) This move to save money was our trial. For those without Internet access you can request the newsletter in printed format, **but you have to let us know.**

You can do that at our website: <https://www.hlaa-or.org/>.

WHEN the CDC lifted the mask requirement, we all found ourselves able to “hear” a little better thanks to increased lip reading ability. Now, however, masks are advised indoors again. Don't hesitate to let others know you have a hearing loss. Ask them to speak in ways that you find help the most: speak a little louder, speak clearly, or be sure to face you when they speak.

WHICH brings up another question: Do you wear your hearing aids? If you have aids in a drawer, they are not helping you one bit. If you only wear them on select occasions (to a movie, play, or family event) you are not giving them a chance.

Hearing is a brain activity that requires regular stimulation to interpret sounds correctly. If you don't wear the aids every day, you will not get the benefit of better hearing.

If your aids hurt your ears, something is wrong. Have your hearing specialist take a look, tell them your problems, and work together to find a solution. Just like eyeglasses, aids may need adjusting.

Learn how to turn the aid volume up and down, as needed. Some aids can be operated with a smart phone. Learn how to do that.

You have so much to gain and little to lose by automatically reaching for your hearing aids first thing in the morning and letting them train your brain to hear better and get the best of life for yourself.

You bought those aids so make them work for you. Let me know how your life changes, please.

HAAA, Oregon State Association OFFICERS & BOARD MEMBERS

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HEAR IT IS! #86

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Jeanne Levy, editor; and Eileen Marma, business 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@hearinglossOR.org.

For advertising information and rates, contact Eileen Marma at info@hearinglossOR.org. Deadline for Fall, Aug. 15, 2021; Winter, Nov. 15, 2021.

Website: <https://www.hlaa-or.org/>.

Government changes, *continued from page 1*

the Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing communities and will be stronger for it,” said Jake Cornett, Executive Director of Disability Rights Oregon. “We owe a debt of gratitude to Senate President Courtney and House Speaker Kotek for their leadership in ensuring all Oregonians can access the legislative process.”

Biden directs HHS to consider allowing OTC hearing aids to be sold within 120 days

July 9, 2021

Washington, D.C. — Today, President Biden issued an executive order directing the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to consider issuing proposed rules within 120 days, allowing hearing aids to be sold over the counter.

Since the passage of the Over-the-Counter Hearing Aid Act of 2017, the Food and Drug Administration, the agency under HHS responsible for the rulemaking, has been working to create regulations regarding this new category, intended for adults with mild to moderate hearing loss. However, the FDA has yet to release the rules that were due August 2020.

The passage of this act will make affordable hearing aids available for millions of Americans.

This is a victory for the many adults with mild to moderate hearing loss who need to treat their hearing loss. Many struggle to afford the cost of hearing aids, which are often not covered by insurance.

It is time we make hearing health a priority and make it accessible and affordable to get devices.

If you are struggling with your hearing, get it checked. Hearing Loss Association of America is here to help as your information source and advocate. We also encourage you to connect with your local HLAA Chapter for support. See page 9.



PHOTO BY HEADWAY ON UNSPLASH

Upcoming HLAA board meetings

The July 2021 quarterly HLAA-OR board meeting had to be postponed. Check our website for the next one. The meeting will be held online at Zoom between 10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. If you would like to attend remotely, send an email to John Hood-Fysh, jhoodfysh@gmail.com and he will send you a link.

Looking for a job, *continued from page 1*

sume or letter of inquiry. It might discourage a prospective employer from granting you an interview at all. Once an interview has been granted, you must determine whether you should reveal your hearing loss prior to or at the interview.

Some of the considerations

Does the employer screen prospective employees with phone interviews? If you have trouble hearing on the phone, and you need the assistance of Captioned Phone Services, you might want to advise the employer so you can make the phone call to them at a designated time. You should also be prepared to advise them that a delay in response could be the result of the nature of Relay services.

Do you need an accommodation at the interview? If you need to request the employer provides an accommodation for the interview or to complete the hiring process, clearly, you must disclose your hearing loss in advance of the interview.

Do you own your own Assistive Listening Device? If you depend on an Assistive Listening Device and own one, plan to bring it along

with fresh batteries. This shows your “take charge,” problem-solving capacity, and your ability to manage your own hearing loss. It gives the prospective employer a chance to see you in action and to get to know you better.

How many people will be present at the interview? While you might be able to handle a one-to-one interview without accommodation and without revealing your hearing loss, a large room with many people attending could put you at a disadvantage if you have not revealed your hearing loss.

Will you need accommodations on the job? If you expect that you will need an accommodation to participate in meetings or otherwise perform the job, you should provide that information at the interview, so the employer can ask questions to understand what accommodation will be needed. It would be best not to surprise the employer later.

How comfortable are you with your hearing loss? If you can inform your prospective employer about your hearing loss in a mat-

Continued on page 7



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 (online, \$35); 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.

If you still receive a printed copy of this newsletter, please share it with a friend.

'Best' hearing aids out there

By Dr. Joanie Davis, Au.D., CCC-A, F-AAA, Board Certified in Audiology

JUNE 30, Tampa Bay Times

It's time to look for a hearing aid when hearing loss starts affecting your quality of life. If social outings are no longer enjoyable, family members are urging you to seek treatment, or your spouse complains of how loud you keep the TV volume, it's time to take the next steps.

It doesn't have to be so difficult to choose hearing aids. The reality is there are six major manufacturers, and all of them have great products. The hearing aid that you choose is the least important decision you make. *The professional you see is the most important thing.*

Hearing Aid Specialist vs. Doctors of Audiology

There are two types of hearing health care professionals you can see. A hearing aid specialist holds at least a high school diploma and undergoes a six-month apprenticeship supervised by another hearing aid specialist.

A Doctor of Audiology holds an eight-year college degree with the last year being a residency year of full-time patient care supervised by another Doctor of Audiology who has at least two years of experience. This doctor is a salaried medical health professional who can recommend hearing aids, cochlear implants and bone-anchored instruments; treat vertigo; and sees pediatric patients.

Hearing aid specialists can fit hearing aids and are typically commissioned professionals trained in sales.

There is a huge difference in knowledge and the types of treatments each professional can implement.

Insurance Coverage

Another barrier to seeking hearing loss treatment is fear of the cost. Now, most major insurance plans have significant insurance coverage, and a lot of them require a doctorate of audiology degree to be a provider.

It is imperative that the hearing healthcare professional you see verifies your specific insurance **before** ordering any devices.

Best Hearing Aid Manufacturers

There are six major manufacturers who provide the best products. All of these manufacturers offer Bluetooth and wireless options as well as rechargeability.

Each manufacturer has specific features unique to them. This is why it is important to speak with a Doctor of Audiology to see which features best suit your hearing loss, lifestyle, and personal preferences.

Following are some of the best known hearing aid brands:

- GN Resound One
- Oticon More
- Phonak Paradise
- Starkey Livio Edge
- Signia Pure Charge&Go
- Widex Moment

It is important to make sure you see a hearing health care professional who works with all manufacturers so you can choose the product that suits your specific needs.

Important Steps

In summary, treating hearing loss can be overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be.

You will need a hearing health care professional to achieve the success you need and want. And remember this: it is required by law to have a 30-day trial with hearing aids before keeping them. Enjoy getting back in the conversation!

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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)



<https://www.oregonrelay.com>



Higher standards needed for understandable captioning

<https://bit.ly/2UQ0krL>

July 27, 2021 – by Shari Eberts

As a person with hearing loss, I spend a lot of time thinking about captions. This is understandable, because captions are my critical lifeline to many forms of communication.

I often wonder: Are captions provided on this upcoming webinar? Do I need captions for this important phone call? Will the caption readers at the movies work this time? How can I get captions to show up on my husband's forehead? (I wish!)

Captions are incredibly helpful, but only if they are high quality — meaning they are accurate and well synchronized with the content I am trying to understand. Otherwise, they do more harm than good. Captioning standards are needed.

Quality captions benefit everyone

Over 100 studies demonstrate captioned content benefits everyone, hearing loss or not.

These studies show captions improve video comprehension, as measured by higher rates of recalling facts, drawing inferences, defining words, and summarizing main ideas. People also spend more time paying attention to captioned content. And captions make it easier to watch on mute, which is how many people consume videos on social media.

All this is true, but only if the captions are high quality. Unfortunately, how this quality is defined is often unclear. Better standards are needed.

Standards needed for captioning

Standards for quality captioning across all forms of media and delivery channels are essential. All video content posted on websites and social media should have high quality captions available, as should all video conference calls and webinars. The same is true for in-person meetings, lectures

and entertainment. These captions must be accurate and well-synced with the video.



Another important place is captioned telephone service. In the United States, captioned telephone service is provided free of charge to people with hearing loss under Title IV of the Americans with Disabilities Act. I have a captioned telephone, as do nearly 500,000 other Americans with hearing loss.

The service is only as good as the accuracy and timeliness of its captions. Yet quality standards have not been established by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the government body charged to oversee captioned telephone service.

The Clear2Connect Coalition is actively advocating for standards to be set and applied to all cap-

Continued on page 11

DID YOU KNOW?



people over the age of 60 have hearing loss

HEARING LOSS IS ABOUT

2X

AS COMMON
IN ADULTS
with diabetes



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

<https://bit.ly/2VzzXGo>

* Hearing Loss Statistic: American Academy of Audiology. Alzheimer Statistic: John Hopkins University National Institute on Aging Study Arch Neurol. 2011 Feb, 68(2):214. Diabetes Statistic: American Diabetes Association

HAVE YOU HAD YOUR HEARING CHECKED RECENTLY?

Schedule your appointment today with the hearing experts at Pacific EarClinic

(503) 352-2692



PACIFIC earCLINIC

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333 SE 7th Avenue, Suite 4150
Hillsboro, OR 97123
PacificEarClinic.org

Looking for a job, *continued from page 3*

ter-of-fact way, it's advisable to do so right at the interview. Demonstrating a matter-of-fact, and positive approach to your hearing loss will work to your advantage in the interview.

At the Interview

When you arrive at the interview, be prepared to make on-the-spot changes. You might need to ask people to change seats, face windows, or eliminate distracting sounds.

Be matter of fact. Don't apologize for your hearing loss, and don't spend a long time talking about it. The interviewers want to know what you can do for them. Let them know what an asset you will be to their organization.

Understanding the Interviewer

Put yourself in the interviewer's shoes. They don't know you, don't know about hearing loss, and want to be sure they hire the right person for the job — someone who fits in well with their team and is an asset to their organization. Put them at ease. Make them comfortable with you as a person with a hearing loss and with your potential as an employee.

Watch for clues that they are uncomfortable. They probably won't know about hearing loss and might feel that they don't know what to think or how to behave. They might wonder if the presence of a worker with a hearing loss will affect the chemistry of the department. Is the

worker with hearing loss going to be less efficient, slower, more dependent, more demanding, less capable? Can the individual really get the job done? How will the person with hearing loss communicate on a regular basis? Will accommodations cost a lot? Why should they hire you?

Convince them that they want you! Sell your: skills, experience, demonstrated competence, self-assurance, and personality. ■

Read more job interview tips at <https://bit.ly/3xQz7TP>.

We hope this helps you find the perfect job for you.



LNS Captioning

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



www.LNSCaptioning.com



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[HTTPS://WWW.NWACCESSFUND.ORG/](https://www.nwaccessfund.org/)

Do you qualify for a discount?

Oregon Lifeline is a federal and state government program that provides a discount on Phone (\$12.25) or high-speed internet (\$16.25) 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

If you live on Tribal lands, there are additional programs that may qualify you. Please visit www.lifeline.oregon.gov or call for more information.

Proof of eligibility:

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

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

Call (800) 848-4442 TTY

(800) 648-3458

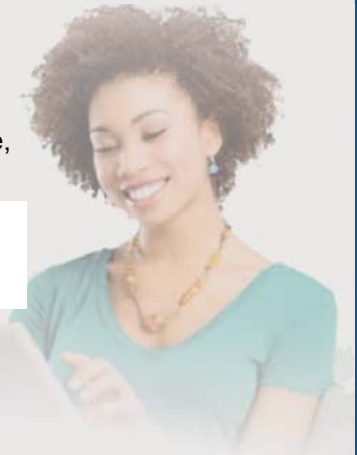
VP (971) 239-5845

We accept all relay calls.

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 disability in one of the following:

Hearing • Mobility • Cognition • Vision • Speech

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Monday—Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.



Info/application:

<https://bit.ly/37E64aP>



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.

Through chapter meetings and newsletters you'll find:

- Insights into effectively living with hearing loss
- Support/Referrals/Information
- Information about the latest technology
- Coping strategies & tips
- An opportunity to make a difference
- Diminished feelings of isolation and aloneness
- Opportunities to share concerns; hear from others

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.

Your participation benefits not only you, but others who attend as well.

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

HLAA of **Portland** meets the third Saturday each month (except June, July, and August) at 10 a.m.; holds virtual meetings on the same schedule using Zoom. To be notified of every meeting, please email us 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.

HLAA 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 of **Linn and Benton** counties meets the last Wednesday each month (except June, July, & Dec.) at 6:30 p.m. at the Reimar Building, next to Albany General Hospital, 1085 6th Ave. SW, Albany, OR 97321. Contact: John Hood-Fysh, email: jhoodfysh@gmail.com; 541/220-8541 (cell – call or text), 818 Broadalbin St. SW, Albany, OR 97321.

Note: HLAA of **Douglas County** no longer meets the requirements for a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Reinstatement may occur, but right now this group meets as a support group. Contacts: Vincent Portulano, president, email: HLAADC@outlook.com; or Ann Havens, secretary, 541/673-3119. Check with them for location for meetings and time.



Archer Captioning

Elizabeth Archer | Captioner

ArcherCaptioning@gmail.com
www.ArcherCaptioning.com
503-319-0122



http://hlaa.convio.net/site/PageServer?pagename=walk_home_page

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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 e-mail: info@hearinglossOR.org.

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Contact Eileen Marma at info@hearinglossOR.org.

It is easy to make a donation to HLAA-OR.

Go to our website, hlaa-or.org, and, in the 'donation' dropdown menu, click on 'pay invoice.' You will be directed to a payment method, one-time or monthly. Thank you!

Captioning, continued from page 6

tioned telephone service independent of the delivery method — either by trained human captioner (CART), automatic speech recognition (ASR), or a combination of the two.

CART vs ASR

There is debate about the quality differences between captioning provided by CART versus ASR, but I sometimes think that misses the point. Why should we care how the captions are generated? Isn't it more important that they are accurate and timely?

Today, human captioners are better suited to highly technical or jargon-filled presentations, but ASR is likely to catch up over time, especially if there was a way to pre-populate the algorithm with any challenging terminology.

Rather than debate the mode of delivery, perhaps we can come together as a community to advocate for good standards instead — standards that would be applied to all delivery methods.

The poor quality operators — both human and ASR — would soon fall to the wayside, while the highest quality providers of both types would move to the forefront. Everyone would benefit.



For example, Asian elephants are smaller than their African cousins, and their ears are smaller.

How can you help?

Advocacy is hard work, but we can all contribute. When we advocate for ourselves — requesting captioning at meetings, on websites, and elsewhere — we are not only exercising our rights. We are educating others about the importance of providing captioning and other accommodations.

Reach out to companies and organizations to hold them accountable for captioning problems. Those problems in the U.S. can be reported to the FCC: <https://bit.ly/3iV9Kdv>

To advocate for good captioning standards, you can also write to your congressional representatives or contact the FCC directly.

Hearing loss is big loss for many

While there are many types and causes of hearing loss, noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL) is a common type of that occurs due to damage to the structures of the inner ear caused by exposure to loud noises.

Nearly one in four adults aged 20 to 69 have evidence of noise-induced hearing loss, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Some of the common symptoms of NIHL include:

- Ringing in the ears;
- Feeling of pressure in the ears; and
- Hearing muffled sounds.

NIHL can be caused by one-time exposure to a high frequency sound, such as a loud blast from an explosion, or from repeated exposure to loud sounds over an extended period of time.

Wear ear plugs in environments such as loud concerts, construction sites or when you are near loud vehicles, avoid noisy places when possible, and keep the volume turned down when watching TV or listening to music

Protect your ears. Your hearing is precious!

Research unveils 'cocktail party effect'

Plenty of people struggle to make sense of lots of converging voices in a crowded room. Known as the "cocktail party effect," people with hearing loss find it hard to understand speech in a noisy environment.

New research suggests that, for some listeners, this may be a processing problem in which two ears blend different sounds together — a condition known as binaural pitch fusion.

The research, co-authored by scientists at Oregon Health & Sci-

ence University and VA Portland Health Care System, was published in the *Journal of the Association for Research in Otolaryngology*.

The study's lead author attributes these difficulties to abnormally broad binaural pitch fusion in people with hearing impairment. The study suggests that fusing of different sounds from both ears leads to sound blending together in a way that is often unintelligible.

"This differs from what people with normal hearing experience" said Lina Reiss, Ph.D., OHSU School

of Medicine. "People with normal hearing can separate and understand the multiple voices, but they just get confused about which voice is saying what."

Researchers revealed that people with hearing loss experienced abnormal fusion of speech across both ears, even for different voice pitches. Participants heard an entirely new vowel sound.

Reiss hopes new therapies will improve speech perception to help those with hearing loss. ■



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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.

[] I wish to remain anonymous.

[] 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.