

# Hear It Is!

Oregon



Spring 2017

Issue 69

## Hearing Loops Get the Vote

*By Stephen O. Frazier  
Hearing Loss Support Specialist*

Hearing-impaired individuals prefer this assistance system. The consumer-led movement to increase awareness and availability of hearing loop technology in the US continues to gain momentum. And, in Great Britain, where it's the predominant assistive listening technology, there has been a resurgence of interest and support for audio frequency induction loop systems (AFILS), more commonly just called hearing loops. Even though FM and infrared are dominant in the US, those advocating for hearing loops have claimed for years that it is the preferred assistive listening technology, but there had been scant documentation to support that contention. The Committee for Communication Access in New Mexico ([www.ccanm.homestead.com/home.html](http://www.ccanm.homestead.com/home.html)), has provided some hard figures that support that claim. The CCAnm has conducted an online survey on the matter that provides a pretty clear picture of when, where and how hearing-impaired individuals access assistive listening systems (ALS), and their preferences when doing so. Using the online services of Survey Monkey, CCAnm mounted a 10-question survey and then invited more than 2000 known hard-of-hearing e-mail recipients to participate, and to also invite their hearing-impaired friends and relatives to do so. The survey was also promoted on social media and, in all instances, participation was restricted to those with a hearing loss. There were more than 350 participants when the survey was closed down.

Demonstrating both why they need an ALS and that they are savvy consumers, more than 98% of those taking the survey report that they have hearing aids or cochlear implants, and nearly 90% report having telecoils in their devices in order to connect to the electromagnetic signal from a hearing loop. Because a different survey found that only about 33% of American hearing aid buyers are even told about telecoils and hearing loops when they initially purchase their devices, that 90% figure demonstrates that these individuals have made a concerted effort to learn more about hearing loss, its treatment and technologies that supplement or complement their hearing aids.

Nearly 50% of respondents report avoiding activities where they know there is no ALS and expect they might have difficulty hearing the proceedings, clearly demonstrating the need for an ALS to draw in this segment of the public. However, when asked, "If you go to a theater, place of worship, meeting room or other venue that has an assistive listening system where you must borrow a receiver and a headset, how often do you borrow the equipment?" a scant 19% reported "always borrowing the equipment," with 13% saying, "usually" and another 23% claiming "sometimes." That left a huge number (45%) saying that they never borrow the equipment. When a neckloop option was added to the question, there were more takers for the borrowed equipment, with only 31% responding "never" instead of the previous 45%.

As the old saying goes, "the proof is in the pudding": When offered the option of using a hearing loop that would allow the user to simply touch the t-switch on the hearing aids or cochlear implant to access the ALS, 59% of respondents who had telecoil-equipped devices reported "always" using the system; this is three times the number reported for receiver/headset systems. With another 15% reporting they "usually" activated their telecoils, you're up to nearly 75%. These figures are impressive by themselves, but when you add another 12% who say they "sometimes" turn on their t-coils and access the loop, you're up to 86%, a truly meaningful endorsement of AFILS technology. *[continued on page 11]*

## From My Lips to Your Ears

Editorial by Chuck Vlcek

We give a warm welcome to David Baldrige who was just appointed to the HLAA-OR board of directors. His bios is at the bottom of page 11. See the top of the next page for a description of the appointment process.

We also welcome the willingness of our board member Tashi Weinstein to contribute to this newsletter on a regular basis. She has already come up with the idea of a regular "scenario" page. I am giving it a start with my own scenario on page 7, but Tashi will have full responsibility for it in future issues. It is likely to be a work in progress, and the format may change with time. We may already have a scenario for the summer issue but readers are encouraged to share their own experiences and/or tips on handling a challenging situation.

The front page article is about our affinity for induction loop systems, at least those of us who know about it. There seems to be a certain assumption that those who do not know about this system or how it works will favor it over FM and IR systems once they learn and try it out. Installing and maintaining

loop systems do require some technical knowhow but using it is easy – just turn on your t-switch.

Congressional re-introduction of a bill supporting over-the-counter (OTC) hearing aids is discussed on page 6, and is worth following. HLAA recently held a webinar on this topic.

### **HLAA, Oregon State Association Officers and Board Members**

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*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](mailto:info@hearinglossOR.org).

For advertising information and rates, contact Eileen Marma at [info@hearinglossOR.org](mailto:info@hearinglossOR.org).

Deadline for Summer 2017 edition: June 30, 2017.

## HLAA-OR Board Election Results

Three board members seeking another term and all officers were re-elected. Anyone wishing to serve on the board immediately may be appointed by the president, subject to approval of the whole board. Such appointments are effective only until the next election in April 2018, when the appointee may run for a full 3-year term. On May 17 David Baldrige was appointed (see page 11 for bios). If you would like to join the board, please contact President Clark Anderson at [clarkoa@msn.com](mailto:clarkoa@msn.com) or leave a message at 541-736-4804.

**The next HLAA-OR board meeting will be held July 8, 2017 at Albany General Hospital (Reimer Building). The following meeting will be held on Oct. 14, 2017.**

Guests and persons wishing to confirm should contact President Clark Anderson at [clarkoa@msn.com](mailto:clarkoa@msn.com) or leave a message at (541) 736-4804.

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## ***Within Earshot: News You Need to Know***

### **New Lithium Batteries?**

NOVA recently aired a program on the future of batteries, explaining how they worked in the past and what is in the works for the near future.

It is well known that the present lithium-ion batteries present a significant fire hazard. The cause is a growth of metal crystals that eventually causes a short between cathode and anode. The radical solution was to develop a kind of solid-state electrolyte that would prevent this growth and any kind of shorting. You could safely cut such a battery, and they are much easier to manufacture. In addition, this permits the use of lithium itself rather than lithium-ion.

The new lithium batteries would have 3 times the energy density as the old ones, meaning that the same size battery would last 3 times as long on a single charge. In addition, they can be safely be recharged in minutes and can be recharged twice as many times as the old ones.

Obviously these improvements would have a huge impact on the many gadgets that could use such batteries, from automobiles down to laptops, cameras, smart phones, and hearing aids and cochlear implant (CI) processors. In the case of hearing devices, they could be simply be made smaller. This would be a boon for in-the-ear and behind-the-ear model hearing aids and single-unit CI processors such as Advanced Bionics' Rondo and Cochlear's Kanso.

### **OTC Hearing Device Update**

U.S. Senators Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), Maggie Hassan (D-N.H.), and Johnny Isakson (R-Ga.), on March 21 reintroduced legislation to make hearing aids for those with mild to moderate hearing loss available over the counter (OTC). ([S.670](#))

A companion bill led by Representatives Joe Kennedy III (D-Mass.) and Marsha Blackburn (R-Tenn.) was also introduced in the House. ([H.R.1652](#))

The bipartisan legislation would make certain types of hearing aids available over-the-counter (OTC) and remove unnecessary and burdensome requirements that currently create barriers for consumers who could benefit from hearing aids. Approximately 30 million Americans experience age-related hearing loss, yet only about 14 percent of those with hearing loss use assistive hearing technology, often because they cannot afford costly hearing aids.

### **Oregon Legislation of Interest**

Since it is not possible to keep up with the Oregon legislative calendar in a quarterly newsletter, the reader is encouraged to subscribe to the Oregon Association for the Deaf newsletter online by contacting [enews@oad1921.org](mailto:enews@oad1921.org). The news also covers a range of other topics besides legislative matters.

# Hearing Loss Scenario: Airports

*By Chuck Vlcek*

I had to change planes at SFO on a flight home. The gates to connecting flights are announced on the plane upon arrival, but I prefer to just check the departing flight schedule on the nearest display board at the terminal. I had to walk a fair distance to reach the gate indicated, then sat and waited. As boarding time approached, it was strangely quiet. I got suspicious and checked the flight board again, and learned that the gate had been changed to one near where I had gotten off the previous flight. I scuttled back there and saw that passengers were boarding but my group had not been called yet, so I was able to catch my breath.

***As a person with hearing loss, how would you handle this situation?*** Here are some tips:

*Listen for announcements if you can.* Admittedly this is easier said than done. Airports are noisy places, announcements blare and echo, and many are of no concern to you except to be annoying. It should be noted that some airports are being looped in the U.S., and most European airports have been looped for decades. If you are at a looped airport, turn on your T-switch.

*Talk to a flight attendant or gatekeeper if you are unsure.* They should be more than willing to help, especially if they are made aware that you have difficulty following announcements.

*Read the boards.* Departing flights are listed in alphabetical order of the name of your destination. Not only does it give you the gate number but it also provides the flight status (on time or expected departure, or boarding). Status information should also be posted at your gate of departure. Be aware that last-minute changes can occur.

*Do you have an experience, plausible scenario, and/or tips you would like to share? If so, please e-mail [info@hearinglossOR.org](mailto:info@hearinglossOR.org) with "Hearing Loss Scenario" in the subject line, or write to HLAA-OR, P.O. Box 22501, Eugene, OR 97402.*

We hope that Hearing Loss Scenario will be a regular feature in this newsletter. It is the brainchild of Tashiko Weinstein who is on the HLAA-OR board of directors. She will be the person responsible for the contents of this page.



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## Chapter Capers

Douglas County Chapter: The April meeting had to be cancelled because several members were unable to attend. The May meeting is scheduled for the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Chapter president Vincent Portulano received an HLAA scholarship to attend the HLAA convention in Salt Lake City in June. He is also a board member and one of two chapter coordinators for HLAA-OR. Chuck Vlcek, a former chapter president and current secretary for HLAA-OR will also be attending the convention.

Portland Chapter: At the March 20 meeting Denise Thew, of Western Oregon University's Regional Resource Center on Deafness discussed the results of her 2016 survey of Oregon's deaf and hard-of-hearing residents. The speaker for the canceled January meeting, Evonne Serpa, Au.D., audiologist at the Hearing Resource Center in the Hollywood District, attended the April 17 meeting. She demonstrated a variety of Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs). On May 15 (originally scheduled for March) Nicole Brent from Cochlear Americas® talked about cochlear implants -- topics included recovery time and hybrid music feedback. The chapter's board election was also held on May 15. No meetings will be held during the summer.

Lane County Chapter: The topic at their May 11 meeting was Career Success after Hearing Loss. The topic for the June 8 meeting will be Hearing loss: Problem Situations and Solutions.

**What is your chapter doing? Send your story to the editor at [cvlcek@centurytel.net](mailto:cvlcek@centurytel.net) See pages 14-15 for contact information for these chapters and events.**

## CI Corner

Conventions serve two very useful functions. First, they bring like-minded people together and second, they provide access to a wealth of information. The annual HLAA convention is a good example of this (see page 4).

People who have cochlear implants make up a subset of all those who have hearing loss. While they share many things that are of concern to the general hearing loss population, there is a certain uniqueness in the way cochlear implants work and in the way implantees function. Thus it makes sense to have a convention just for them.

In February I attended a convention called "Cochlear Celebration" held in Orlando, FL. It was organized by Cochlear, Inc., the manufacturer of the CIs that I wear (disclaimer: not to be construed as a plug for this company). While much of it could be seen as a glorified infomercial, the camaraderie it generated was real. Children from rural areas were able to meet other CI children for the first time in their lives. A young woman who attended was later described on Facebook as appearing much happier than she had been in years. She had been very excited at the prospect of meeting others like herself. One session was devoted to a panel of Cochlear-sponsored scholarship recipients who described their experiences growing up with a CI. Another session was headed by Richard Reed, a musician who lost his hearing and had to learn how to play music again after being implanted.

A major concern among CI users dealt with the availability and timing of processor upgrades. A new generation comes on the market every five years, and older generations are eventually discontinued. I learned that it takes several years for a new generation to be approved by the FDA, vs only one year for new hearing aids. Also, the CI manufacturer cannot provide any information about a new product in the pipeline that could be construed as marketing during the testing and approval process, or the FDA will halt the process.

- by Chuck Vlcek

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## Hearing Loops Get the Vote *(continued from page 1)*

Advocates report that there are a number of reasons for this dramatically demonstrated preference for hearing loops. First among them is the fact that, for those with telecoil-equipped hearing aids or cochlear implants (CIs), the freedom from borrowing and returning loaned receivers and headsets (or even neck loops) is key. Concerns over loss or damage to their precious hearing aids if they must be removed is another major concern, followed by hygienic concerns in regard to the borrowed headsets or ear buds. Another reason offered by the more informed users is that their hearing aids customize sound to match the pattern of their audiogram, offering more amplification to those frequencies they don't hear well, something a headset does not do. For those with a cochlear implant, headsets simply won't work with their devices, but all CIs now being implanted have telecoils. According to a recent Consumer's Guide to Hearing Aids, published by James W. Wilson, Inc., more than 70% of all current hearing aid models have or can be fitted with telecoils. The experience in churches that have installed a hearing loop ALS is that members of the congregation whose hearing aids don't have telecoils soon replace them with new ones that do after they see their hard-of-hearing friends enjoying the benefits they offer.

According to Leland Bowen, a retired engineer and the sound technician at the Albuquerque NM area's Las Placitas Presbyterian Church, "This system has been highly praised by numerous people who have hearing aids with telecoil capability. People who did not wish to use the older [FM] system, which required the use of a receiver, are now able to hear the services very well without background noise or other problems, or having to pick up a receiver before each service, meeting or concert."

Although theaters, legislative chambers, meeting halls and other venues have decided to "get in the hearing loop," churches are still the number one user of the technology among public gathering places. Many churches have been looped after one or more hearing-impaired members of their congregation have attended a service at another church and experienced the much improved communication access that church's hearing loop offered. There have even been reports of people leaving their unlooped church to become a member of one where they can hear and enjoy the service via a hearing loop.

The response to the final question asked in the survey leaves no doubt as to the preference of the informed members of the hearing-impaired public. When asked, "...which would you recommend for a facility where a new or upgraded assistive listening system is to be installed?" a resounding 80% said a hearing loop system, clear evidence that they want to follow the admonition of the Hearing Loss Association of America to "Get in the Hearing Loop."

To see the complete survey and its results, go to [www.ccanm.homestead.com/home.html](http://www.ccanm.homestead.com/home.html) and click on the "loop survey" link. For more information about hearing loops, go to [www.loopnm.com](http://www.loopnm.com).

### **Biography for newly appointed HLAA-OR board member David Baldrige**

David's hearing loss was first detected when he was in the third grade and gradually worsened until he became profoundly deaf when he was in his mid-twenties. He now has bilateral cochlear implants. He is a Newcomb Fellow and Associate Professor of Management at Oregon State University where he also serves as Director of Business Managers Programs and Director of the Management Discipline. He has a Ph.D. in Management from the University of Connecticut. He is a long-time member of ALDA and HLAA and served on the board of directors of ALDA Boston. His research included examination of the workplace experiences of people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing.



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# Chapters in Oregon

Local chapter meetings are open to all. 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*
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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. Following is a list of the current chapters and contact people in Oregon.

**HLAA of Salem meets the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday each month (except July and August) - 6:00 PM at the Salem Hospital Community Health and Education (Building D), Creekside Overflow Room, 939 Oak Street SE, Salem, OR.**

Contact: Mary Fagan  
e-mail: [hlasalem@live.com](mailto:hlasalem@live.com)  
(503) 409-5491  
3253 Dallas Hwy NW Salem, OR 97304-4222

**HLAA of Lane County meets 2nd Thursday each month - 7 PM at the Hilyard Community Center, 2580 Hilyard Street - Eugene.**

Contacts: Andrea Cabral  
e-mail: [angora@comcast.net](mailto:angora@comcast.net)  
(541) 345-9432 voice  
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Clark Anderson  
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HLAA of Portland meets the 3rd Monday each month (except June, July and August) 6:30 PM in "Building 2", 2nd floor, on the Legacy Good Samaritan Campus, 1040 NW 22nd Ave. (at Marshall), Portland 97210

Contact Anne McLaughlin  
e-mail: [hlaportland@gmail.com](mailto:hlaportland@gmail.com)  
PO Box 2112  
Portland, OR 97208-2112  
[www.hearinglossor.org/portland/](http://www.hearinglossor.org/portland/)

HLAA of Douglas County meets the 4th Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at Westside Christian Church, 2712 West Harvard Avenue, Roseburg, Oregon.

Contacts: Vincent Portulano, President:  
email: [HLAADC@outlook.com](mailto:HLAADC@outlook.com)

Ann Havens, Secretary (541) 673-3119

HLAA of Linn and Benton Counties meets the 3rd Thursday of each month (except July, Aug., and Dec.) – 6:30 PM at the Senior Center, 65 "B" Academy Square in Lebanon.

Contact: John Hood-Fysh  
e-mail: [jhood-fysh@wwmore.com](mailto:jhood-fysh@wwmore.com)  
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### **Chapter coordinator contacts:**

**Oregon: Richard Little**  
e-mail: [Richard16@comcast.net](mailto:Richard16@comcast.net)  
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(541) 818-0003 (home)  
PO Box 215, Sweet Home, OR 97386

**Oregon: Vincent Portulano**  
e-mail: [vportulano@hotmail.com](mailto:vportulano@hotmail.com)  
15491 Highway 99, Oakland, OR 97462

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Here It Is! Oregon Spring 2017 Newsletter

*I would like to receive (or continue to receive) this newsletter.*

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Organization Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_  Please send my newsletter via e-mail

I learned about the newsletter from: \_\_\_\_\_

- 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 bottom of page4 for fee schedule).

Or you can sign up online at [www.hearinglossOR.org](http://www.hearinglossOR.org) (click membership, then click 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\*** PO Box 22501, Eugene, Oregon 97402.