

Hear It Is!

Oregon



Autumn 2015

Issue 63

How to Survive a Holiday Party with Hearing Loss

Written by [C. Scot Frink, audiologist](#)

It's that time again. Halloween is on the way out, and department stores are getting their holiday products prepped and ready to sell to anxious shoppers. Holiday parties and family gatherings are right around the corner, and besides all the hustle and planning of gifts and dinners you have something else on your mind: your hearing.

For those of us with hearing impairment, holidays can bring a stress that others may not understand or expect. In crowded rooms filled with holiday music and laughter, some of us find ourselves feeling overwhelmed and stressed by conversations we struggle to hear. However you can prepare for these situations with these communication tips from Woodburn Hearing Center, and head into the season with confidence!

To start, call and set up an appointment with your audiologist for a tune-up. Hearing aids should be professionally cleaned and examined every six months at least. Your hearing loss may have also changed, and your audiologist will be able to adjust the settings on your hearing aid for optimal amplification.

When at a holiday party, there are several precautions you can take before you arrive. Have extra batteries with you, just in case. Background noise such as a television playing sports or a radio playing holiday music can make it difficult to hear others. If possible, let your host know that you have a hearing impairment and that this is a concern. A courteous host should take this into consideration and limit or lower the volume of background noise in the environment. If you cannot change the level of background noise at the party, try to distance yourself away from the source.

One-on-one conversations in quiet rooms are definitely going to be the best option for you. Find someone who you enjoy talking with and see if they would be willing to find a quieter area to talk. Large group conversations can be hard to follow — especially when friends and family are all talking over one another or have multiple conversations going at once. This is where you can be strategic with your seating. Sitting against a wall is best for sound quality because the sounds will all be in front of you.

Regardless of whether you can lip read or not, seeing someone's face while they are talking can improve communication immensely. Choose a seat that will allow for you to see as many faces as possible. If you have a "better ear" you can also seat yourself so that most of the conversation is taking place on that side. You can make sure you sit by a friend or loved one who will help you understand things you may have missed in conversation.

Lastly, make sure to manage your expectations. Don't be afraid to tell people about your hearing loss. Hearing loss is very common and is nothing to be ashamed of. If you let others know, they will likely be more accommodating in the way they communicate and will understand if you have trouble understanding.

C. Scot Frink, MS, FAAA, is an audiologist and owner of Woodburn Hearing Center and Salem Audiology Clinic.

From My Lips to Your Ears

Editorial by Chuck Vlcek

Once in a while I have a stranger or acquaintance ask me about my hearing aids. It so happens that I do not wear hearing aids, though I used to. I now have bilateral cochlear implants. It seems that a lot of people do not know the difference.

This is not too surprising, since few people have cochlear implants, far fewer than those who wear hearing aids. Also, implant processors look (and in some ways function) a lot like digital BTE hearing aids. As any CI user knows, there are some very important differences in how they work. But the public does not know that, and in some circumstances that lack of knowledge could have some serious consequences.

One such circumstance is the loss or malfunction of a CI processor vs a hearing aid. That is the subject of the article in CI Corner on page 9. Future articles will touch on other aspects of how they differ and, equally important, what attributes they do share.

If the holidays are over before you read the front page article, save it for the next big event, be it a wedding, family reunion, or whatever. The tips are always useful and timeless.

If you do not live in or near Portland, do not despair. TV captioning ordinances (page 7) may soon be coming to a town near you. Even if they do not, local businesses may voluntarily keep those TV captions turned on.

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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.

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

Deadline for Winter 2016 edition: December 31, 2015.

Board Election Notice

Elections will be held in April 2016 for up to 11 seats on the HLAA-OR Board of Directors. We meet each quarter (see schedule on page 3). There may also be committee meetings. A full description of Board duties and activities is provided by the Board Reference Manual at: http://www.hearinglossor.org/HLA-OR_BoardReferenceManual.pdf. Should you be interested in serving on the board or have questions, please contact the Nominating Committee Chair for 2015, at info@hearinglossOR.org **no later than January 15, 2016**. You should include your biography with any application to be placed on the ballot. Please note that board members are *required* to be members of the Hearing Loss Association of America (see page 4 to join).

HLA-OR Quarterly Meeting Dates

The next meeting will be held Jan 9, 2016 at Albany General Hospital

(Room 1AB, 3rd floor). Other meetings in 2016 will be held April 9, July 9, and Oct. 8.

To confirm, contact President Clark Anderson at clarkoa@msn.com or leave a message at (541) 736-4804. Guests are invited to attend but should first contact President Clark Anderson.

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Convention 2016 Registration will be Open: In keeping with tradition, early-bird registration will open no later than October and will provide discounted registration rates through January 31, 2016. Increased rates will begin February 1 and continue through May 31 when pre-convention registration closes. On-site registration will be available.

Individual Membership in HLAA is \$35 for 1 year, \$95 for 3 years, or \$140 for 5 years.

One-year membership in HLAA is \$20 for student, \$45 for couple/family, \$50 for professional.

Membership includes the award-winning bi-monthly magazine, *Hearing Loss*. Write to HLAA, 7910 Woodmont Ave., Ste. 1200, Bethesda, MD 20814; 301-657-2248 (Voice); 301-657-224 (TTY); 301-913-9413 (Fax) or www.hearingloss.org.

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Within Earshot: News You Need to Know

Apps for your Hearing

The Sept.-Oct. issue of the HLAA magazine has a two-part article (continued in the Nov.-Dec. issue) titled “Mobile Device Apps for People with Hearing Loss”, written by Larry Medwetsky. It lists a number of apps that are available for free or inexpensive downloads to smartphones, tablets, and the Apple Watch.

The apps described in the Sept.-Oct. issue fall into three categories: hearing screening, amplifier, and hearing aid remotes. The Nov.-Dec. issue covers apps for captioning, hearing assistive technology, tinnitus relief, and more. Some individual apps have been described but most have not been purchased or tested by the author or otherwise vetted, and no endorsement is given or implied.

The amplifier apps could be useful as a backup for a hearing aid that has become lost or dysfunctional while waiting for its repair or replacement (see CI Corner on page 9). They work by using the mobile device's microphone and apply either simple amplification or more complex processing to improve sound quality. However, there are some caveats, and some do not perform that well. They generally work best in quiet settings, and for individuals with mild to moderate hearing loss.

The article is available on HLAA's website at www.hearingloss.org (>Hearing Loss Magazines) and includes links to websites for the individual apps.

New HLAA-OR Vice President

The HLAA-OR board of directors has elected Eileen Marma as its Vice President, replacing Karen Brockett who has resigned from the board. Her term as V.P. expires at the next annual meeting on April 9, 2016. Eileen is also working with Karen Swezey as business editor of this newsletter.

HLAA-OR Board Meeting Date Changes

The schedule of HLAA-OR board meetings has been changed (see page 3). The board now meeting on the second Saturday of January, April, July, and October. The October meeting date may be changed to avoid football traffic. That means that there was no meeting in December 2015. It also means that the annual meeting and elections will not be held until April 9, 2016. The meetings will continue to be held at Albany General Hospital.

Chapter Building Workshop Canceled

The Oregon and Washington state associations of HLAA have canceled a workshop on Chapter Building for current and prospective chapter leaders which was scheduled to be held on October 24.

The cancellation was due to the resignation of the national HLAA Chapter Coordinator, Ed Ogiba, who was supposed to conduct the workshop. No decision has been made yet whether to try to reschedule the workshop, pending the appointment of a new HLAA Chapter Coordinator.

Public Places in Portland must have TV Captions Turned On

The Portland City Council recently passed an ordinance which requires that television receivers located in any part of a facility open to the general public must have closed captioning activated at all times when the facility is open and the television receiver is in use. Any person owning or managing a public facility must activate closed captioning on any closed captioned television receiver in use in any public area during regular hours. An exception is made if no receiver of television programming of any kind is available in a public area of the public facility or if the only receiver of television that is available is incapable of displaying closed captioning. Confirmed violations that are not corrected are subject to fines up to \$500 for each day the violation occurs.

The primary purpose of this ordinance is to allow persons with hearing loss to be able to have similar access to TV as “hearing” people. This includes regular TV programming, sports events, etc. It also includes emergency announcements, such as storm warnings, terrorist attacks, etc. Persons who do not have English as their primary language will also benefit. Even “normal” hearing people will benefit because background noise is at a level that even they cannot understand what is being said on TV.

The ordinance actually benefits businesses because once captioning has set up as the norm, such things as the training of staff, searching for the remote, etc. would be eliminated. Other localities such as the City of San Francisco and the state of Maryland have similar ordinances.

This ordinance is in keeping with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), in particular Title III, which basically mandates accessibility of public accommodations to those with disabilities.

Endorsements for this ordinance were provided by the Portland Commission on Disability, Office of Community Technology, Oregon Communication Access Project, Oregon Association of the Deaf, the Portland chapter of HLAA, and HLAA-OR.

Are your TV Captions in the Wrong Place?

Quite often, closed captions on your TV are in an inconvenient location. A common and frustrating example is when it covers part or all of the score box in sports programming. This is not supposed to happen but it does happen for a variety of reasons. However, many TVs and set top boxes, especially newer ones, give you the option to change the location (and appearance) of the captions. You just have to find it on the menu, and the manual that came with your TV or set top box may help you with that. Unfortunately, you may have to move it again when you change the channel. Watching a public TV? Good luck with that.



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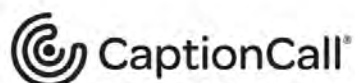
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Professional certification of hearing loss required to participate in this program. A standard phone line and Internet connection are also required. The free phone offer includes free delivery, installation and in-home training by a friendly CaptionCall Trainer.

Chapter Capers

Douglas County Chapter: No meeting was held in October due to personal schedule conflicts and one member being ill. Most of their nine members were able to make it to the September and November meetings. Frank and Dolores Elias will host the December potluck meeting on the 19th.

Portland Chapter: The chapter was given a "Making a Difference" award by the Portland City Council at a ceremony on November 17. Each year the City Council presents these Spirit of Portland awards to "individuals and groups who make outstanding contributions to our community."

A potluck was scheduled for their December meeting on the 21st. In January their meeting location moves across NW 22nd Avenue to "Building 2" at 1040 NW 22nd at Marshall. See page 15 for contact information.

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



CI Corner

Backing up your Hearing Device

Suppose your hearing aid or CI processor malfunctions, is damaged, or lost. Eventually it will be repaired or replaced, but what happens in the meantime? Ideally you would have a serviceable spare on hand which will tide you over. But suppose you don't have one. Then what do you do?

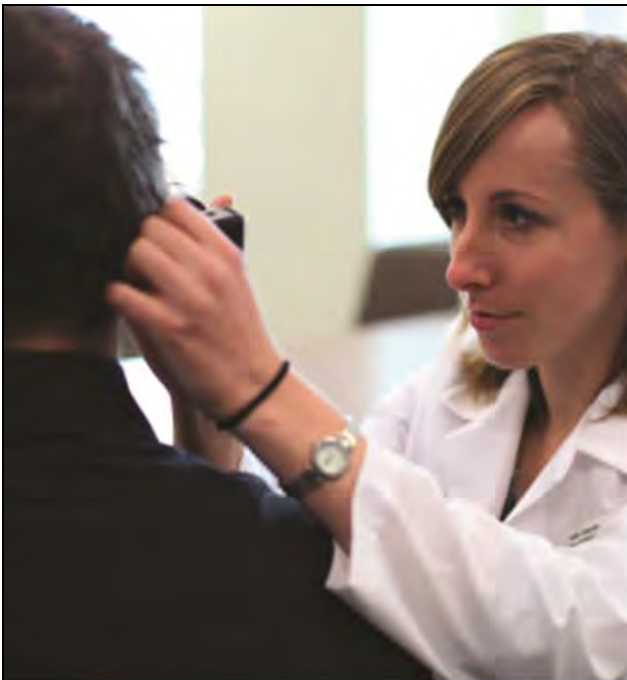
If you use a hearing aid, you have several good options to reduce your downtime, especially if your hearing loss is mild to moderate. If you have a smart phone, there are free or inexpensive apps that will transform it into an amplifier (see page 6) and provide some of the functions of a hearing aid. You may be able to obtain a loaner from your local audiologist or hearing aid dealer. As a last resort, you might borrow a spare hearing aid from a friend.

If you are using a CI processor, your options are much more limited, and you may be facing more serious downtime with a completely deaf ear. Because of the way a CI works, amplifying devices and apps based on amplification simply won't do. You can't borrow someone else's processor because it has to be compatible with your CI and also programmed to work with it. If you don't have a spare on hand your only option is to obtain a loaner which has to be programmed (mapped) by your audiologist, or at least one equipped to do the work and has access to the information on your program (map) settings. Unless you live close to your audiologist's office, it may take a while to make the arrangements, possibly more than 24 hours.

A final important consideration: if the loss or destruction of your processor is the result of an accident that also results in serious personal injury requiring hospitalization, you may not be capable of arranging for a loaner. Make sure someone knows how to contact your audiologist. The patient identification card that came with your CI should have that information.

We hope you have found this information helpful. Please send any questions you may have regarding cochlear implants to cochlear@ohsu.edu.

- OHSU Cochlear Implant Team (see ad on page 12)



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FCC tells TV Manufacturers not to Hide the CC Symbols

How many times have we tried to turn on the captions on a hotel TV we are not familiar with, and to waste time trying to locate the CC symbol? Is it on the remote or is it on the screen, via menu options, or on the TV set? Some of us had to call the hotel engineer to come up for help. No more, if FCC has its way. FCC ordered all TV manufacturers to make the CC symbol more visible, either on the remote or on the screen or even on the TV set. – *reported by Deaf Digest*

Ring in the New Year right – order and share Survivor's Manuals!

Historic Changes Coming for Access to Hearing Aid Compatible Wireless Phones

The Hearing Aid Compatibility Act of 1988 requires the FCC (Federal Communications Commission) to ensure that all wireline telephones manufactured or imported for use in the United States must be hearing aid compatible. The scope of the Act was expanded in 2003 to include wireless phones. However, the rules established in 2003 were just a beginning, and have not been modified since. They stated that only 33% of wireless phones manufactured were required to be hearing aid compatible (HAC). More importantly, the FCC gave no guidance or timeframe to increase the percentage of phones that are HAC.

Thanks to a collaboration among HLAA, the wireless industry (represented by the Telecommunications Industries Association, CTIA – The Wireless Association®, and the Competitive Carriers Association) and consumer groups (represented by HLAA, the National Association of the Deaf and Telecommunications for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Inc.), that is all about to change.

On November 12, 2015, a [consensus letter](#) was filed with the FCC outlining a plan to make *all* wireless phones hearing aid compatible within the next eight years. Specifically, it requires that 66% of wireless phones be hearing aid compatible within two years; 85% within five years; and 100% within eight years.

The consensus letter goes on to suggest that these metrics should be given some oversight. To that end, beginning in year four, a task force of all stakeholders will be convened to determine the effectiveness of the rules and to make sure the benchmarks as set out are achievable. The task force will also consider the need to balance hearing aid compatibility with the need for innovation by wireless phone manufacturers.

For example, hearing aid compatibility is currently measured through standards established by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). Hearing aids can achieve an “M” rating of between 1 and 4 (M4 being the best) that determines the level of RF (radio frequency) interference between a hearing aid and phone’s microphone. They also earn a “T” rating of between 1 and 4 (T4 being the best) which rates its electromagnetic coupling for use when the consumer’s hearing device has a telecoil. When the task force convenes they will look at the possibility of additional or alternative measurement criteria based on the data collected up until that time and make recommendations taking into consideration the technological and market needs at that time.

If the FCC adopts this agreement, it would be a leap forward for hearing aid compatibility in the wireless industry, an “historic” moment. To consumers, the adoption of these rules means greater selection of wireless phones for people who use hearing aids and cochlear implants. Given that only a limited percentage are currently HAC, knowing that in just a few years most phones will be hearing aid compatible will give consumers greater choice in their search for a new phone.

HLAA has been working diligently in the role of lead negotiator throughout the process to bring these needed changes to consumers, but the whole agreement would not have happened without the backing of some key individuals and organizations. Most notably, without the support of the FCC, and in particular, FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler - who has made access to telecommunications for the entire community of people with disabilities a hallmark of his tenure - this consensus agreement would not have come to fruition. HLAA is grateful to Chairman Wheeler, the FCC and all of the industry and consumer groups who worked tirelessly over the past several months to get this proposal realized.



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We ask for Your Support!

Please support HLAA, Oregon State Association and this newsletter through your donations. With your help, we can continue to reach out and educate Oregonians about hearing loss and the many ways to cope with it. *Knowledge is power.*

If you have not contributed in the last 12 months and are able to do so, please use the form on the back of the newsletter, and mail your tax-deductible gift to:

HLAA, Oregon State Association, PO Box 22501, Eugene, OR 97402

We thank the following folks who have sent donations since the last issue:

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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*
- *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 and 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. Following is a list of the current chapters and contact people in Oregon.

HLAA of Central Oregon (HLAACO) meets on the 2nd Wednesday of the month from 6 to 8 PM at the St. Charles Medical Center, 2500 NE Neff Road, Bend, in Conference Room A (by the front entrance).

Contact: Cliff Tepper
1664 NE Redrose Court
Bend, OR 97701
(541) 390-2174

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Applications are generally due mid-March each year.

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
(541) 345-9432 voice
PO Box 22501 OR Clark Anderson
Eugene, OR 97402 e-mail: clarkoa@msn.com

HLAA of Salem meets the 4th 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: hasalem@live.com
(503) 409-5491
3253 Dallas Hwy NW Salem, OR 97304-4222

HLAA of Portland meets the 3rd Monday each month (except June, July and August) 6:30 PM in "Building 2", on the Legacy Good Samaritan Campus, 1040 NW 22nd Ave. (at Marshall), Portland 97210

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

HLAA of Douglas County meets the 4th Monday of each month at 6:30 pm. Location is Mercy Hospital Community Education Room (2nd floor), 2459 Stewart Parkway, Roseburg (adjacent to Office Max).

Contacts: Vincent Portulano, President:
email: HLAADC@outlook.com

Robin Illers, Secretary (541) 580-7180

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

Contact: John Hood-Fysh
e-mail: jhood-fysh@wwmore.com
(541) 791-3725 (H) (541)-220-8541 (cell)
818 Broadalbin St. SW
Albany, OR 97321

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To subscribe, e-mail info@hearinglossOR.org and we will notify you with the above link when a new issue is available.

Chapter coordinator contacts:

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e-mail: Richard16@comcast.net
(541) 223-8810 (cell text only) or
(541) 818-0003 (home)
PO Box 215, Sweet Home, OR 97386

Oregon: Vincent Portulano

e-mail: vportulano@hotmail.com
15491 Highway 99, Oakland, OR 97462

HLAA:

e-mail: chapters@hearingloss.org
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