

SEPTEMBER 2025



HLAA

Hearing Loss Association of America
EASTERN CT CHAPTER



UPCOMING EVENTS

UR Community Tech Center

Special Guest Speaker - Dr. Suzanne Ondrus

She earned her doctorate in Comparative Literary
and Cultural Studies from UConn

Monday, Sept. 29th

1:00 pm - 2:30 pm

Want to Communicate Better with Someone Who's Hard of Hearing?

- Nearly 25% of Americans aged 55-64 have hearing loss!
- That number jumps to 50% for those 65 and older

ALL ARE WELCOME!

Location: 153 Spruce Street, Manchester, CT
Register: 860-430-4557



UR Community Cares is sponsoring a talk on communicating with someone with hearing loss. UR Community Cares is a CT based, non-profit organization committed to improving the quality of life for older adults and individuals with physical disabilities, including veterans, by fostering independence, dignity, and social connection. Their mission is to connect older, disabled and special needs neighbors with caring community volunteers to provide in-home non-medical support services that enable individuals to live more fulfilled, independent, happier lives at home, by safely "aging in place" with the dignity, care and respect they deserve.

You can attend the event in-person at 153 Spruce Street, Manchester, CT, or join Zoom link. or virtually at: People can join in person, at 153 Spruce Street, Manchester, CT, or join Zoom link.

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83683345701pwd=s11beyYJS09FKyV6oEVpNAXoaPLalv.1>

Meeting ID: 836 8334 5701

Passcode: 683503

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hello everyone! It's that time of year where we hold on to the last vestiges of summer warmth but we also welcome the cooler brisk fall weather. Autumn, to me, is a time for new beginnings and renewed purpose. Look for details in future newsletters - about our community projects and how we'll expand reaching out to members and the public.

Here's a tidbit to start with: We've all been hearing about Auracast - that it's coming and will be integrated with the existing systems in venues, our homes, business. Here is a great link: www.loopnm.com/auracast.html This is a clearinghouse of information about all Auracast devices intended for assistive listening, to answer your questions.

Warm regards, Janine



JANINE KATOMSKI
EASTERN CT HLAA
CHAPTER PRESIDENT

YOUR CHAPTER BOARD MEMBERS FOR 2025-2026

CHAPTER PRESIDENT: JANINE KATOMSKI (HLAAEASTERNCTCHAPTER@GMAIL.COM)

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BOARD MEMBER AT LARGE: PAT BAILEY



Sept 20, 2025
Oct 18, 2025
Nov 15, 2025
Dec 20, 2025
Jan 17, 2026

Gil Kaminski: Humelan Hearing
Beth Wilson: Hearing Loss and Family Relationships
TBD: Telecoils and Auracast
Lexi Wilson: Cochlear Implants
Isaac Alter: Music and Hearing Loss

Please join us at our next chapter meeting

CAPTIONS AVAILABLE TO ALL ZOOM USERS—A BIG LEAP FOR ACCESSIBILITY

Zoom has announced that they are making automated captions more accessible than ever, rolling this out to all users in phases by the end of September. This means that the “CC” button will now appear automatically in Zoom Meetings—no host or admin intervention required. This accessibility update ensures that users who are deaf or hard of hearing can engage more fully and independently during meetings. Along with this automatic activation comes a refined captioning experience: you can now personalize captions with options like font size, color, placement, and layout to suit your needs better.

Improved Quality, More Languages, and Smarter AI

This update also brings enhancements in transcription quality via Zoom’s updated Speech AI—making captions more accurate even in noisy environments or when complex terminology is used. The platform now supports real-time translation in over 36 languages alongside improved bilingual caption models—including a new Arabic/English pairing. Zoom is also introducing on-device processing for captions, helping ensure they remain fast and reliable, especially when your connection is inconsistent.

Why This Matters

For many in the deaf and hard-of-hearing community, captions are more than an accessibility feature—they are a gateway to meaningful participation. These latest improvements make captioning automatic, adaptable, and higher quality, reducing barriers to communication in both social and professional settings. With language options expanding alongside smarter AI and enhanced customizations, users can now engage in virtual conversations with greater confidence and comfort.



DIRECTOR OF ADVOCACY
ALLEGRA E. KLEIN

JOINING OUR HYBRID MEETINGS

We are pleased to offer a hybrid option for our group meetings. We utilize the WebEx platform (it’s similar to Zoom). WebEx allows for captioning, real time chat, and full view of speaker slides. See our calendar for our meetings schedule. We have a great year planned!

Our montly Saturday meetings begin at 10 AM EST.

Please use the following link to access the meeting:

<https://uconn-cmr.webex.com/meet/kmc02015>



TIPS FOR ACCESSING CAPTIONS IN WEBEX

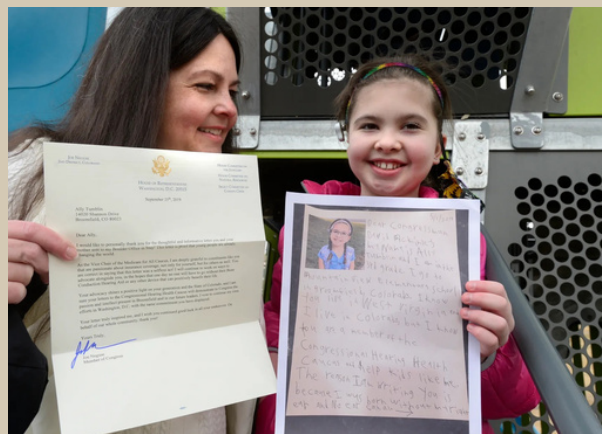
Captions will be enabled for all of our meetings. If you joined our meeting to access captions from the Meetings app or in a full-featured meeting:

1. Click on the CC icon on the lower left of your screen or
2. From the Webex App, tap More options > Closed Captions > View Captions and Highlights

ALLY'S ACT (H.R. 4606)

A critical insurance coverage gap for specialized hearing implant devices affects around 500,000 children and adults in the U.S. with congenital conditions like microtia and aural atresia, or who experience sudden hearing loss from illness or trauma. Ally's Act was introduced as H.R.4606 in the 119th Congress (2025–2026) by Rep. Joe Neguse (D–CO). You can help close this gap by supporting Ally's Act (H.R. 4606), which would require coverage for medically necessary hearing devices. Ally's Act was inspired by the story of Ally, a young girl born without a right ear or ear canal, who was denied insurance for a bone-anchored hearing aid (BAHA).

Ask your representative to co-sponsor and support this important legislation with HLAA's new, easy-to use advocacy tool: hearingloss.org/allys-act
#AllysAct #Advocacy #HearingHealth #HLAA



Pictured: Melissa and Ally. Source - National HLAA

WHY INDUCTION STOVES MAY CAUSE BUZZING IN HEARING DEVICES

Induction cooktops generate strong electromagnetic fields to heat cookware, which in some cases can cause buzzing, humming, or temporary sound distortion in hearing aids or cochlear implants when users are very close to the active surface. These stoves operate by producing rapidly alternating magnetic fields that induce electric currents in compatible pots and pans. However, the same fields can sometimes be picked up unintentionally by the microphones, telecoils, or sensitive circuitry of hearing devices. This can create audible interference that is distracting or reduces speech clarity in the kitchen. Although generally harmless to the function of hearing aids or cochlear implants, maintaining a safe distance from an active cooktop or adjusting device settings often minimizes the impact of interference.



To learn more about this topic:

- Cochlear. (2023). Should you worry about interference? Retrieved from <https://family-news.cochlear.com/en-uk/should-you-worry-about-interference/>
- Cochlear Nucleus CI512 Physician's Package Insert. (n.d.). Precautions: Electromagnetic interference sources. U.S. Food and Drug Administration. https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/cdrh_docs/pdf/P970051S205D.pdf
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration. (2017). FDA guidance: Special controls for wireless air-conduction hearing aids (Draft). <https://doh.wa.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/Documents/2300/2017/FDAGuideHearingAids02017.pdf>



To learn more:

<https://www.hearingloss.org/event/hospital-safety-and-hearing-loss-panel-discussion/>

Hospital Safety and Hearing Loss: A Health Care Panel Discussion

Wednesday, September 17, noon–1:30 p.m. ET

In this interactive, 90-minute webinar, representatives from the Chicago Hospital Safety Program will share strategies and best practices to improve safety, communication, and care, and empower a health care system that works for everyone.

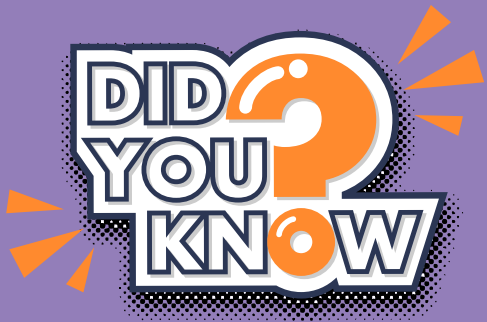
Medical professionals and members of the hearing loss community are invited to attend.

BRINGING THE PATIENT VOICE INTO AUDIOLOGY EDUCATION

In a recent This Week in Hearing podcast, Shari Eberts and Dr. Kathy Cienkowski (UConn) highlight how integrating community-engaged learning—through the book *Hear & Beyond* and participation in a local Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) meeting—enhances audiology students' empathy, cultural humility, and person-centered care. You can listen to the full conversation by clicking on the link to the right. Their work is also featured in the article Integrating Lived Experiences into Audiology Education to Bridge the Empathy Gap, published in Transformative Social Impact (Early Access, August 18, 2025). A big thanks to our local HLAA - Eastern CT Chapter for opening meetings for students to attend!



Eberts, S., & Cienkowski, K. (2025, February 7). Bringing the patient voice into audiology education [Audio podcast episode]. In This Week in Hearing. Hearing Health & Technology Matters.



The World Health Organization (2021) emphasizes that incorporating patient perspectives into training fosters cultural humility and collaboration—both key predictors of improved health outcomes.

Reference: World Health Organization. (2021). WHO Academy charter for the meaningful engagement of patients and communities. World Health Organization. Click [here](#) to access.

HARTFORD STAGE: OPEN CAPTIONED EVENTS



For more information about tickets or accessibility visit: <https://www.hartfordstage.org/plan/accessibility/>

ROPE
OCTOBER 26

A CHRISTMAS CAROL
DECEMBER 7

THE COTTAGE
FEBRUARY 1

DEATH OF A SALESMAN
MARCH 15

NATIVE GARDENS
MAY 3

SWEENEY TODD
JUNE 21

ALL OF THESE SHOW ARE SUNDAY MATINEES THAT START AT 2PM.

MONTHLY

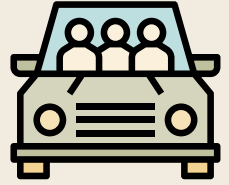
MEETING

The HLAA Eastern CT Chapter holds monthly meetings on the third Saturday of the month. We meet from 10 am to 12 noon in the David C. Phillips Communication Sciences Building at UCONN. We meet in Room 211 on the second floor. The address is 2 Alethia Drive Storrs, CT 06269. Free parking on-site.

Each meeting will feature a different speaker on a relevant topic, and refreshments. Please join us!

CARPOOLING FOR MEETINGS

We have found that some members would like to attend meetings but have no transportation available. If anyone would like to volunteer to drive for a carpool group, please contact Janine at: hlaaeasternctchapter@gmail.com.



Your vestibular system in the inner ear helps control balance—but it can be tricked! That's why you feel dizzy after spinning, as the fluid in your canals keeps moving. Astronauts even experience "space motion sickness" when this system receives confusing signals in microgravity.

*Follow
-US-*

There are more ways to connect with our chapter! HLAA Eastern CT Chapter now has Facebook page. Check out our updated page for chapter updates and events.



HLAA-Eastern Connecticut

DID YOU KNOW?

The Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) uses Zoom for all of educational and product showcase webinars. There is nothing to download – just click on the Join Webinar button on the [Schedule and Recordings page](#).



Check out our website at:
sites.google.com/view/easterncthlaa/home

Do you have information to share with chapter members or suggestions for our newsletter? Please email Kathy Cienkowski at k.cienkowski@gmail.com

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Balance Awareness Week (September 14–20, 2025) shines a spotlight on the millions of people living with vestibular disorders such as vertigo, dizziness, and imbalance. The week raises awareness about how these often-invisible conditions impact daily life and encourages greater understanding, support, and research. By sharing knowledge and resources, we can help improve quality of life and reduce stigma for those affected. To learn more click [here](#).

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