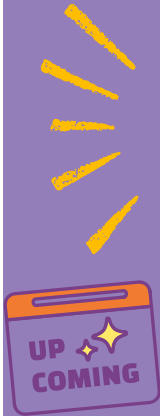


NOVEMBER 2025



HLAA

Hearing Loss Association of America
EASTERN CT CHAPTER



Michelle Puzzo

Please join us at our next meeting on **11/15/25 at 10 AM EST** when we will be joined by **Michelle Puzzo** from UR Community Cares. She will be discussing how the organization matches older and disabled adults with local volunteers for free at-home help.

The **Connecticut Lions Clubs Hearing Aid Program** helps children and adults who need hearing aids but cannot afford them. Through the Lions Hearing Aid Bank, **community members can apply for assistance by contacting their local Lions Club**, which reviews applications and helps match individuals with donated or refurbished hearing aids. The **program works closely with audiologists and hearing-care providers to ensure a proper fit** and improved hearing for every recipient. Supported entirely by volunteers and donations, the program reflects the Lions' mission to serve and strengthen local communities by helping people reconnect with the world of sound.

Lions Clubs International is a global service organization with more than 1.4 million members in over 200 countries. Lions focus on vision, hearing, diabetes, hunger relief, and community well-being. Their volunteer efforts make a lasting local and global impact. Learn more at www.lionsclubs.org.

For more information about the CT Hearing Aid program click [here](#) or see the application at the end of this newsletter.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hi everyone! I hope you are enjoying the crispy autumn weather and the beautiful foliage, while preparing for the holidays. My community outreach is ramping up - check out my article and photos, in this newsletter. We have set up a user friendly donation page, on our chapter website, to: 1. Accept new members (just a one time payment of \$25.00 is required) 2. Fund our community outreach expenses, mentioned in donation page.

Our website URL: sites.google.com/view/hlaaeasternctchapter/home
Just click on "donate" header on top of page, scroll down the donate section, hit the "donate" button, to open up a drop down payment form. When you make your donation, you will receive an emailed "thank you" letter, to use as a tax deduction document. Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions or comments and we hope you join us at one of our meetings with interesting speakers/topics!

Warm regards, Janine



JANINE KATOMSKI
EASTERN CT HLAA
CHAPTER PRESIDENT

YOUR CHAPTER BOARD MEMBERS FOR 2025-2026

CHAPTER PRESIDENT: JANINE KATOMSKI (HLAAEASTERNCTCHAPTER@GMAIL.COM)
VICE PRESIDENT: KATHY CIENKOWSKI (K.CIENKOWSKI@GMAIL.COM)
SECRETARY: ROBERT MURPHY (ROBERTHMURPHY99@GMAIL.COM)
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BOARD MEMBER AT LARGE: PAT BAILEY



Nov 15, 2025
Dec 20, 2025
Jan 17, 2026
Feb 21, 2026
Mar 21, 2026

Michelle Puzzo: UR Community Cares
Lexi Wilson: Cochlear Implants
Isaac Alter: Music and Hearing Loss
Andy Chandler: Cybersecurity and Hearing Loss
Wynne Whyman: Hearing Loops

Please join us at our next chapter meeting

DO YOU HAVE HEARING FATIGUE?

In her article *Hearing Loss Exhaustion: When Listening Becomes Too Much*, hearing health advocate Shari Eberts shares a relatable experience many with hearing loss will recognize — the overwhelming fatigue that comes from constant listening. At a noisy school event one time, Eberts found herself surrounded by 150 talking parents and quickly realized she couldn't keep up. Her brain worked overtime trying to lipread and guess missing words until she finally stepped away — not out of defeat, but self-preservation.

Eberts explains that listening fatigue isn't about lack of effort; it's a physical reality. The brain of someone with hearing loss must work much harder to piece together speech using visual and contextual clues, leading to mental exhaustion.

To manage this, she offers practical strategies:

1. **Know your limits** and take breaks before you burn out.
2. **Budget your hearing energy** — prioritize meaningful conversations.
3. **Use technology** such as speech-to-text apps, remote microphones, or captioning.
4. **Shape your environment** by choosing quiet, well-lit spaces.
5. **Speak up** about your needs — ask to move somewhere quieter.
6. **Recover** with quiet time to reset your mind.

Eberts reminds readers that walking away isn't quitting — it's smart self-care.

Managing hearing loss means balancing engagement with rest to protect your well-being and preserve energy for the conversations that count.



DIRECTOR OF ADVOCACY
ALLEGRA E. KLEIN

Read the full article by Shari Eberts here: <https://livingwithhearingloss.com/2025/10/28/hearing-loss-exhaustion-when-listening-becomes-too-much/>

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

OUR COMMUNITY OUTREACH ACTIVITY

BY JANINE KATOMSKI, PRESIDENT

The first week of October was very busy for me, with two different events.

I tabled and spoke, at the Human Guide Training seminar, at Connecticut State Community College, in Manchester. This was sponsored by a wonderful organization our chapter is collaborating with - UR Community Cares and featured the regional director of the Helen Keller National Center for Deaf/Blind youth and adults. It was wonderful to meet caring professionals and grateful attendees, who made use of captions, sign language and tactile signing.

Also, my hometown of Norwich, had a big outdoor Healthy Living Fair, sponsored by the Greater Norwich Area Chamber of Commerce. I met so many nice health care providers and organizations and made a connection for our chapter, with the regional Lions Club. We will be working together with a local Lions chapter on a program that funds Starkey hearing aids for income based qualified applicants. If you are interested in this, or know of someone who can use this help, please email me at: hlaaeasternctchapter@gmail.com for further instruction.



Pictured (left to right): First photo -Human Guide Training, Janine and Michelle Puzzo of UR Community Cares, Second photo - Janine speaking at the training seminar, Third photo - Janine and Andre tabling at the Norwich Healthy Living Fair, Fourth photo - Janine and Angela Adams, Director of GNACC at Healthy Living Fair.

MEETING RECAP: LESSONS FROM BETH WILSON

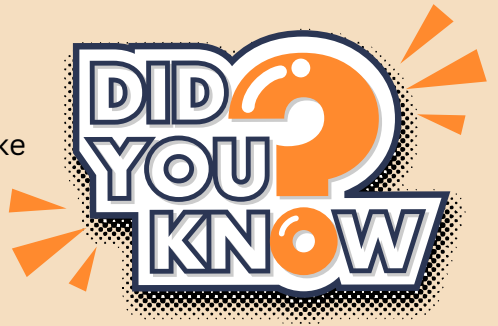
Living with hearing loss can be tough—especially around family. At our October meeting, Dr. Beth Wilson shared how gatherings that should feel warm and easy often become frustrating and lonely. Family members forget to face people with hearing loss, talk over the TV, or say “never mind” when asked to repeat something. Over time, that isolation leads to hurt feelings and coping habits that don’t help—like bluffing through conversations or talking nonstop to avoid missing anything.

Dr. Wilson also addressed some common myths: turning up the volume isn’t a magic fix, and hearing aids don’t make everything clear. Good lighting, less background noise, and seeing the speaker’s face matter far more. Most importantly, she reminded our members that hearing loss doesn’t just belong to one person—it affects everyone in the conversation. The best fix isn’t louder voices, but better understanding. Speaking slower, being patient, and checking in can make a world of difference. As Dr. Wilson aptly noted, “We share our hearing loss with everyone we talk to.” When families take the time to learn how to communicate better, everyone feels more connected—and that makes the world a little kinder and easier to hear.



ACCESSIBILITY AND ELECTIONS

Election day is around the corner and here are some helpful tips to make Election Day easier and more accessible for voters with hearing loss.



- **Plan ahead:** Bring any hearing devices, spare batteries, or assistive accessories you might need.
- **Check for accommodations:** Many polling places worldwide are equipped with assistive listening systems or allow a support person.
- **Ask for written communication:** If it's difficult to hear officials, ask them to write down instructions or use speech-to-text apps on your phone.
- **Reduce background noise:** Step closer to the poll worker or move to a quieter spot if possible.
- **Use visual information:** Look for printed signs or written instructions rather than relying on spoken announcements.
- **Bring ID and voter info:** This minimizes communication stress and speeds up the process.
- **Practice self-advocacy:** Politely explain that you have hearing loss and may need people to speak clearly, face you, or repeat information.

For more information check: "Accessible Voting" — Connecticut Office of the Secretary of the State: <https://portal.ct.gov/sots/election-services/accessible-voting>



Fun fact: President Ronald Reagan was the first U.S. president to publicly acknowledge wearing hearing aids! He began using them in the early 1980s, which helped normalize hearing aid use and brought national attention to hearing health awareness.

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.

Hard of Hearing Community Discussion

Luisa Gasco-Soboleski, President,
Connecticut Association of the Deaf, Inc.



Janine Katomski, President,
HLAA Eastern Chapter



**Tuesday, Nov. 18th
1-2:30pm**

In Person and Zoom meeting

Location: 153 Spruce Street, Manchester, CT



WHAT WE WILL EXPLORE

- This session is designed to promote respectful communication and a deeper understanding of the diverse experiences within the hearing community

**Register to join, call/text 860-430-4557 or
email: info@urcommunitycares.org**

MONTHLY

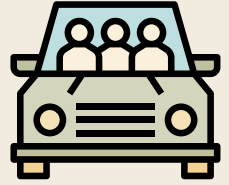


The HLAA Eastern CT Chapter holds monthly meetings on the third Saturday of the month. We meet from 10 am to 12 noon in the David C. Phillips Communication Sciences Building at UCONN. We meet in Room 211 on the second floor. The address is 2 Alethia Drive Storrs, CT 06269. Free parking on-site.

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.



Holiday gatherings can be hearing challenges.

Thanksgiving dinner is one of the “noisiest meals” of the year—clattering dishes, overlapping conversations, and background music can make it tough for guests with hearing loss to follow along. Turning off the TV or using good lighting helps everyone stay connected.



*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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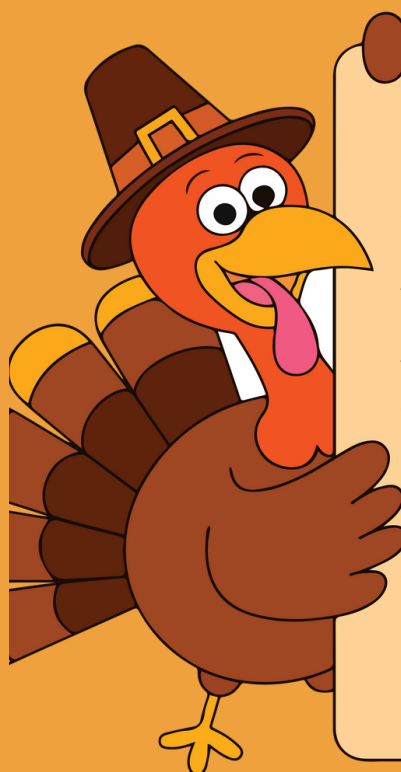


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A note about our sponsors/advertisers: The Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) believes that information about products and services that could benefit people with hearing loss should be made available to consumers to help them make informed decisions about their hearing health care. As such, reference to specific products, services, organizations or claims made in advertisements or sponsorships through our newsletter —does not constitute endorsement, recommendation, or favoring by HLAA, nor does exclusion suggest disapproval. While we make every effort to provide accurate and reliable information, HLAA does not control or guarantee the accuracy, completeness, or efficacy of information contained in any advertisement or sponsorship.



1. Turkeys have amazing hearing! Even though they don't have external ears, wild turkeys can detect sounds up to a mile away thanks to specialized ear openings on the sides of their heads.

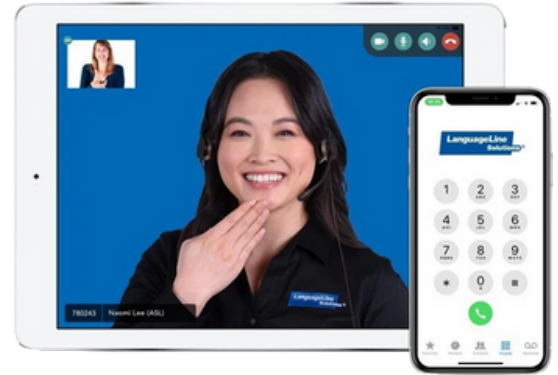
2. Gobbles don't travel far. Male turkeys' famous "gobble" can be heard up to a mile away in the woods—but background noise (like wind or chatter) makes it harder to hear, much like how people with hearing loss struggle in noisy settings.

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All-in-one wireless glasses,
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Need Help Communicating at the Polls?



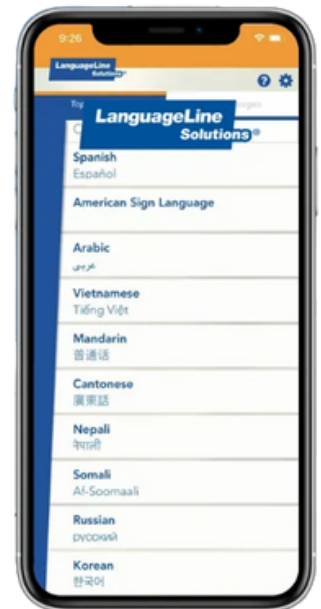
What is it? The Multilingual Virtual Poll Worker (MVP) System is an on-demand application that connects voters with live interpreters of over 250 languages including ASL.

Breaks Down Language Barriers in Voting For:

- Voters who communicate via American Sign Language
- Voters who are not fluent in English

How Does it Work?

- Approach the moderator and ask to use the MVP system.
- Poll workers may access the MVP system by laptop, tablet or smartphone to initiate phone or video calls with native speaking translators of your desired language.
- Indicate the language you need assistance in.
- The poll worker will select your needed language from a list or search for it directly.
- In a few moments an interpreter will appear on screen, introduce themselves, and facilitate communication between you and your poll workers.



Where is it Available? All towns may opt-in to use the MVP system for a small fee, but it must be planned for in advance. Contact your Registrar of Voters as soon as possible to see if it will be available or to request in your town.



Find Out More at myvote.ct.gov or Contact Your Town's Registrar of Voters

Connecticut Lions District 23C
Hearing Aid Assistance Program



Patient Information

Full Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone Number: Home () _____

Work () _____

Cell () _____

E-Mail address: _____

Date of Birth _____ Male _____ Female _____

Care Giver/Contact Person (ie patient has difficulties communicating by phone)

Full Name: _____

Relationship to patient: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone Number: () _____

Email Address: _____

Do You currently use Hearing Aids? Yes _____ or No _____

Name of Audiologist: _____

Address: _____

City: _____, State: _____ Zip code _____

Phone: () _____

An Audiologist Audiogram is Required with Application

Name of Medical Doctor: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code _____

Do you have Major Medical Insurance? Yes or No —

Plan Name: _____

Member ID# _____

Have you received any local Social Service benefits: Yes No

Have you received any State Medicaid Or Title XIX benefits? Yes No

Total of Monthly Expenses (Mortgage rent, utilities, car loan, medical bills etc.

\$ _____ per month

Total Income per month (Wages, Social Security, Pension, Rental Income, etc.

\$ _____ per month

Please describe why you require financial assistance in receiving a Hearing Aid:

Signature: _____ Date: _____

PLEASE RETURN THE COMPLETED/SIGNED FORM TO:

Susan Fisher
366 Ash St. #13
Willimantic, CT 06226
Email: suefisher111@gmail.com

LIONS USE ONLY:

APPROVED YES _____

NO _____

DATE: _____

INITIAL _____