



December 2019

Renew your membership to our local chapter for only \$15 a year! 3 ways to renew: pay at the Reception Desk, see Len Bridges, our Treasurer, at a meeting, or send your renewal with your name, address, phone number, and e-mail to: East Bay Chapter, HLAA, P.O. Box 12484, Oakland, CA

94604-12484. See back page to sign up and support National HLAA.

MEETING INFORMATION FOR SATURDAY, December 14, 2019

Topic: "The ways we cope with Hearing Loss," a members' discussion group about our ongoing problems in social situations, also a 'show and tell' of our latest gadgets which allow us to hear better. Audience participation is encouraged, so please come prepared to share a funny story, or a frustration you have recently experienced. Please bring finger food to share at this Holiday Potluck.

Schedule:

9:00 a.m. - Set up: We always love to have you come early to help!

9:30 a.m. – Refreshments, coffee and tea will be served. Please bring finger food for Potluck!

10:00 a.m. - Meeting starts: Introductions, Announcements, speaker.

NOTE: Meeting is captioned, and the room is looped. You won't miss a word! Use the hearingloop system by turning your hearing aid(s) to the Telecoil (T-coil) setting. Thanks to Peter Townsend, Steve Ulrich and the team for setting up our room, the audiovisual, and the captioning.

11:30 a.m. - Meeting adjourns.

How to find us: Come to the Fabiola building, 3801 Howe Street, Oakland. Free parking is available across the street, in the Kaiser parking structure. From the garage, walk across Howe Street and go into the Fabiola building. Take the elevator down to the ground floor and go to Room G26. For directions to Kaiser, call 510-752-1000.

HLAA-EB will post to the California State Association webpage and our website.

Check out our website: <http://www.hearinglosseb.org/> Contact us: info@hearinglosseb.org

MEETING NOTES: *Hearing Aids That Improve Hearing of Speech in Noisy Environments*

At our Nov. 9, 2019 meeting, our guest speaker was Dr. Shariq Mobin, Ph.D., a graduate from the University of California, Berkeley, with a doctorate in auditory neuroscience and machine learning. During the last few years, Dr. Mobin has been researching algorithms that amplify specific voices in noisy places where it's often difficult to hear what people are saying. Dr. Mobin is the founder and CEO of AudioFocus, Inc., a start-up developing new hearing aid technology to help people hear better in noisy environments. Initially, Dr. Mobin set out the 3 goals of his presentation:

1) Teach us about Bluetooth technology; 2) Learn more about our specific hearing issues; 3) Share the



research on which AudioFocus is working as they try to build hearing aids (H/A's) to improve hearing of speech in noisy environments.

Bluetooth Technology Applications to Hearing Aids:

Bluetooth is simply a way for our devices to communicate wirelessly, instead of plugging a wire from one device to another. There are two main functions of Bluetooth that are particularly relevant for hearing aids (H/A's): 1) You can communicate commands to adjust the volume or the settings of your H/A's with your phone, rather than having to press buttons on your H/A's; and 2) You can stream audio directly to your H/A's from your phone so the sound is enhanced without having to press the phone up to your ears. Another example of Bluetooth application is where you can plug a device into your TV that streams the audio directly from the TV to your H/A's, and then you can hear the TV a lot better.

In addition, there are many other new special ways that you can edit how your H/A's are functioning, based on commands on your phone or other devices. For example, there is the sound enhancer which allows you to increase the volume of high/treble sound frequencies, which are more often a problem in age-related hearing loss than low/bass frequencies. Other features in hearing aid apps that are now available include: Reduction of background noise in noisy environments; speech focus on direction of a person's voice; switching between different profiles (outside vs. home).



Bluetooth allows you to adjust the settings of your hearing aids with a more fine-grained control. In fact, both Google and Apple are spending a lot of time and effort on adding functionality to apps on their phones to make it easier for individuals to adjust their own H/A's in order to enhance their hearing without always having to see an audiologist for necessary adjustments, but only after the audiologist's initial hearing testing, prescription, and H/A's programming.

Specific Hearing Issues & Problems:

Moving on to his second goal of learning more about our specific hearing issues, Dr. Mobin first



asked how many audience members actually use Bluetooth with their hearing aids. Only about a quarter of the present audience members raised their hand to acknowledge that they used Bluetooth technology with their hearing aids, or even knew how to effectively access or apply some of the Bluetooth functions which he previously described.

Dr. Mobin then asked about "What doesn't work?" In response, several people mentioned that one of the biggest problems with which individuals with hearing loss are confronted is the difficulty of hearing adequately in noisy environments, such as restaurants, cafes, parties, musical events, meetings, television and driving in cars or trucks. Even when wearing hearing aids, individuals often find it difficult to hear other people's speech and be able to clearly detect and understand what others are saying when there is a lot of concurrent background noise.

AudioFocus' Research on Hearing Aids That Improve Hearing of Speech in Noisy Places:

Acknowledging that hearing aids can help most persons to hear better in quiet places, Dr. Mobin explained that his prior research at UC Berkeley and his on-going research at AudioFocus is focusing on solving the major speech detection problem described above. For example, a noisy restaurant is an environment where there might be 10-100 voices, but you may only want to pay attention to the voices of 3-4 friends or family members with you.

Hence, at his company AudioFocus, Dr. Mobin is trying to solve such noisy restaurant problems by using machine learning to design algorithms for hearing aids that selectively amplify only the sounds important to you and build a custom model or “voice print” for specific people, such as friends and family. Then, if you are in a noisy place and attempting to talk to these specific people, you can rely on the voice prints of those people to selectively amplify only those voices so you can hear those voices, but not all the background noise. Dr. Mobin admits that solving the problem of hearing speech in noisy places is a challenge, and his research is in the early stages.

AudioFocus’ Contact Information: For more information or questions about the current research at AudioFocus, please visit <https://www.audiofocus.io/demo>. If you are interested in signing up as a volunteer for trying out and helping to improve their early prototype, please email Dr. Shariq Mobin at shariq@audiofocus.io.

~ Kathy Fairbanks

ACT Theaters, The Geary and The Strand, in SF are now looped! The ACT received a grant from TDF providing Open Captioning for the 2019-20 season. More information about the productions can be found online at this URL: https://www.act-sf.org/home/box_office/1920_season.html. **OPEN CAPTION DATES:** *Top Girls*: Sat., October 5, 2 p.m.; *Testmatch*: Sat., Nov. 23, 2 p.m.; *Wakey, Wakey*: Sat., Feb. 8, 2 p.m.; *Gloria*: Sat., March 14, 2 p.m.; *Toni Stone*: Sat., March 21, 2 p.m.; *Rocky Horror Show*: Sat., May 9, 2 p.m.; and *Poor Yella Rednecks: Vietgone 2*: Sat., June 20, 2 p.m. Sorry! Discounts expired Nov. 30.

In case you missed it! NCEH’s (National Center for Environmental Health at the CDC) Noise-Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL) Initiative has hit the big times! Times Square, that is, a major commercial intersection, tourist destination, and entertainment Mecca known as “The Crossroads of the World.” Times Square is located in the midtown Manhattan section of New York City at the junction of Broadway and Seventh Avenue. It extends from West 42nd to West 47th Streets and is extravagantly and very brightly decorated with billboards and advertisements. A 15 second [Public Service Announcement for Noise-Induced Hearing Loss](#) will be advertised on two of the largest billboards: the NASDAQ unit with 10,080 square feet, and the Thomson Reuters unit with 7,691 square feet, during the weeks of the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day parade (11/25/19-12/2/19) and the week of New Year’s Eve (12/24/19-12/31/19).

One of the most popular annual attractions in NYC, the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade has been a New York City tradition since 1924. Attracting more than 3.5 million people to the streets of Manhattan every year, and watched by an audience of millions of TV viewers, [the displays are expected to be viewed by upwards of 21 million people](#). An estimated one million people celebrate New Year’s Eve at Times Square with over a billion watching throughout the world.

The public health messages are clear:

Protect Your Hearing!

- Loud Noises Can Hurt Your Hearing ... And They’re Everywhere!
- When You Can’t Avoid The Noise ... Pop In Some Earplugs Or Wear Noise-Blocking Earmuffs.
- Your Ears Will Thank You!

For more information on NIHL, please visit: https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/hearing_loss/default.html

HEARING AID BATTERIES!

Gerry Niesar or another Costco member can get them at 17 cents apiece! Your old batteries can be recycled by putting them in a plastic ziplock bag and placing on top of your recycling waste container on your trash pick-up day. Batteries are considered hazardous waste and may not be thrown in the regular trash.

Alternatively, **hearOclub** is a hearing aid and cochlear implant battery subscription service which delivers DieHard brand batteries on a set schedule (with free shipping!). Sign up for a hearOclub subscription and receive **\$30 worth of free batteries plus a battery tester keychain - a \$40 value**, exclusive to HLAA members! Use the coupon code **HLAAMember** online at hearoclub.com or by calling 833.LISTEN-2 (833.547.8362). If you cannot get out easily, batteries are delivered to your address.

DONATE USED HEARING AIDS and/or HEARING EQUIPMENT! To donate, place them in a ziplock baggie and give to the person at the reception desk at the next meeting. These items may benefit low income persons through the Lions Club "Ear of the Lion" program which refurbishes them. For more information, talk to Dale Davis at a meeting or ddavis94605@gmail.com. Applications for hearing aids from Ear of the Lion available at the information table.

East Bay Leadership Team

The chapter is run by a Steering Committee, Leader Dale Davis, ddavis94605@gmail.com

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JOIN THE NATIONAL HEARING LOSS ASSOCIATION!

Only \$45 for an individual or \$55 for a couple. This includes the Hearing Loss magazine in print and digital for one year.

For digital magazine copy only, an individual membership costs only \$35/year. Students are \$25/year.

Go to this URL to join today:

<https://www.hearingloss.org/make-an-impact/become-a-memberrenew/>

**WALK FOR HEARING IS COMING TO THE BAY AREA NEXT SPRING ON MAY 30, 2020!
TIMES AND PLACE TO BE DETERMINED. MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW!**