



## August 2021 Newsletter

Renew your membership in our local chapter for only \$15 a year! Ways to renew: pay at our website on the “Donate” button in the upper right-hand corner; mail your renewal with your name, address, phone number, and e-mail to: East Bay Chapter, HLAA, P.O. Box 12484, Oakland, CA 94604-2484. See back page to sign up and support National HLAA.

**Our August meeting will be held August 14th. Our speaker will be:**

**Elizabeth Wong**, a representative from the California Telephone Access Program (CTAP) will give a presentation on the **Free** specialized phones & adaptable phone equipment & services available to qualified Californians that make it easier to hear, dial & call. The program will be presented on Zoom. Please RSVP at [www.hearinglosseb.org](http://www.hearinglosseb.org). Greetings start at 9:30 & the presentation follows at 10:00 am.

**Register for this free event here:** [www.hearinglosseb.org](http://www.hearinglosseb.org) After you register, you’ll be sent the link to join the meeting. Consider staying after the meeting for AfterWords – a chance to ask more in-depth questions, as well as discuss anything you want with fellow members!

HLAA-EB posts our newsletters to the California State Association webpage and a link on our website. Check out our website at: [http://www.hearinglosseb.org/](http://www.hearinglosseb.org) Contact us at: [info@hearinglosseb.org](mailto:info@hearinglosseb.org)

### MEETING NOTES: *Sonic Alert's HomeAware System (Specialized Hearing Solutions)*

At our July 10, 2021 HLAA-EB Chapter meeting, our guest speaker was **Christine Miller**, Marketing & Sales Associate at Sonic Alert, a Michigan company created about 40 years ago, that focuses on specialized hearing solutions. Christine provided an overview of Sonic Alert’s HomeAware System, a comprehensive, fully customizable system, using light, sound and vibration to notify the user of common everyday events or even dangers that may arise in the home. For example, the system can alert the user that a guest is ringing the doorbell, a video or telephone call is being received, or an emergency has triggered a smoke or CO alarm.



**HomeAware Telephone Ring Signaler with Bed Shaker Package (HA 360MV):** This is the main decision-making center for Sonic Alert’s HomeAware system, available through the California Telephone Access Program (CTAP) to eligible California residents for **Free**. The eligibility requirements for a **Free** main unit via CTAP are: 1) Live in California; 2) Have telephone service; 3) Approval by a medical or a hearing professional (e.g., audiologist). <https://californiaphones.org>

The unit is easy to set up by you or CTAP personnel and has the key features of sound, light and vibrations:

- Flashing strobe with scrolling alert messages on a bright red, large 2-inch display.
- Powerful bed shaker & adjustable alarm to 105 Db.
- Dual alarm clock with alarm & snooze duration.
- Compatible with all traditional & new HomeAware receivers.
- Monitoring of low batteries & broken links between the main unit & transmitters.
- Caller ID for landlines & video phone calls.
- USB plug charges your cell phones while you sleep.
- Full battery back-up.

**Sonic Alert's HomeAware Inventory of Equipment:** A full range of alerting equipment is available at [www.sonicalert.com](http://www.sonicalert.com) which is Sonic Alert's HomeAware online site. After describing the main HomeAware unit, Christine proceeded to review several other products offered by Sonic Alert that may be of particular interest to those of us experiencing hearing loss. Those described below are just a few examples of their many HomeAware products:

**HomeAware Doorbell Ringer Alert**

- Front or back doorbell ringer \* Easy set-up & link to main system unit
- Sound, light & shaking alert \* Can link to doorbell chime box
- Goes thru 3 cycles & then shuts off \* Door video not available yet, but may be soon

**HomeAware Smoke & CO Signaler**

- Signal sent to main system unit \* Distinguishes between a smoke or CO alarm
- Sounds over 70 Db triggers alert \* Battery back-up
- Includes AC adapter \* One-year limited warranty

**HomeAware Vibe Personal Alert**

- Emergency alert button to trigger system \* Pager help button for assistance
- Sound, strobe light & vibrations with patterns \* Customizable alerts
- Compact design with clip & lanyard \* One-year limited warranty

**HomeAware Blink System**

- System notification using strobe light & colors \* Compact foot-print for limited space locations
- Removable notification "puck" \* 48-hour remote use with full charge
- Connection range up to 500 feet \* One-year limited warranty

**HomeAware Smartphone Transmitter**

- Connects your smartphone to the main unit \* Sends as text, FaceTime or cell phone alert

**Hello Summer!**

**35% Off**  
**All Products in Stock**  
**@Sonic Alert**

ENTIRE SITE + FREE SHIPPING

Use Promo Code at [www.sonicalert.com](http://www.sonicalert.com)  
**SUMMER35**

This offer ends August 31, 2021  
Delivery is estimated between 5 to 7 days from receipt of order.  
Discount only valid on sonicalert.com

**Sonic Alert's Special Discount Offer:** Christine concluded by announcing a special discount for 35% off all products in stock on the entire site @ *Sonic Alert*, along with free shipping. This discount offer ends August 31, 2021, and is only valid at [www.sonicalert.com](http://www.sonicalert.com) when you use the following Promo Code: SUMMER35

**For More Information & Questions:**  
Phone: (248) 577-5400

Visit: [www.sonicalert.com](http://www.sonicalert.com)

~ Kathy Fairbanks

## WHAT'S HAPPENING AT HLA NATIONAL?

You may be aware that there is a movement afoot to expand Medicare to include hearing health care. That would mean for the first time, people who rely on Medicare to pay their medical bills would also be able to turn to Medicare to cover the cost of hearing aids and related services. **The time has come to let your Senators and Congress members know that hearing health care matters!** Below is a sample of what you can email to your national representatives. Visit their official websites to send your emailed comments. Or visit their Facebook pages.

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Dear Senator [name of your U.S. Senator] or Dear Representative [name of your U.S. Rep.]:

I am a supporter of Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) and a hearing aid wearer. HLAA let me know that hearing aids and hearing health care services may be included in the proposed bills that will expand Medicare. **I support Medicare Coverage for hearing aids and related services.**

*[add your experience – or your family experience – with the need for hearing aids and the experience of paying for hearing aids out of pocket – or use the following suggested text]*

Hearing aids are important to my life because without them, I cannot do the everyday things that I used to be able to do: talking to my grandchildren, going to the movies or watching television. Without hearing aids, I cannot even hear well enough to understand what is being said in my house of worship.

Treating hearing loss is not simply a matter of allowing me to keep up with family events, as important as that is. Hearing loss has been linked to depression, isolation, falls and even dementia. Simply using a hearing aid may keep me out of the hospital, a rehabilitation facility, or a nursing home.

Being able to purchase hearing aids is important to so many people, but seniors on a fixed income must be able to turn to Medicare to have access to hearing aids and hearing health care services. Without Medicare, where can they turn?

I urge you to ensure coverage so that hearing aids and hearing health care services under Medicare are included in legislation that passes this year.

Please let me know where you stand on this important issue. Thank you!

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Contacting your members of Congress makes all the difference. Thank *you!*  
If you have questions, contact [Lise Hamlin](#), Director of Public Policy at HLAA.

## **BARBARA KELLEY, HLAA President, reminds us to be careful what we are told in the media.**

On July 9th, President Biden signed a sweeping [executive order](#) that included directing the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to consider issuing proposed rules within 120 days for allowing hearing aids to be sold over the counter (OTC). The OTC proposed rules, according to legislation passed in 2017, are a year overdue and have caused mass confusion in the market. It's also delayed access to care for **some** people who might not address their hearing health.

## **Truth: To be very clear, hearing aids sold over the counter are intended for adults with mild to moderate hearing loss.**

Since the OTC rules were part of President Biden's executive order, the media picked up the story. Unfortunately, the TV reporting was misleading and downright incorrect in some cases. For example, "Good Morning America" on ABC reported OTC hearing devices would benefit millions with "extreme hearing loss." They also talked about "price gouging" relative to hearing aids in the report. In truth, the order "directs HHS to issue a comprehensive plan within 45 days to combat **high prescription drug prices** and price gouging." This provision did not pertain to hearing aids.

This type of reporting is misleading and causes more confusion. While some will be able to self-diagnose and self-fit a hearing device when approved by the FDA, it will not be an option for all.

There's also danger when people with more severe hearing loss wait for devices that are not intended for their use and would most likely not address their unique hearing loss.

We have hope for OTC devices, in that some people might take a first step to address their hearing loss, even if it's just some hearing enhancement in specific situations. This could be a first step on the journey of progressive hearing loss. We know that hearing loss is linked to depression, isolation, falls, anxiety and cognitive loss. Better to address hearing loss sooner rather than later. Why wait five to seven years before taking action?

We are pleased to see that President Biden understands the importance of issuing these rules. It's also great to see the media shine a light on hearing health because hearing loss is all too often either untreated or undertreated. But, people must have accurate information so they can make good choices. We also want these devices to be safe, effective and have reliable consumer protections. [HLAA's Recommendation to the FDA on OTC Hearing Aids](#).

### As We Wait for the FDA's Proposed Rules

Even if the proposed rules come out today, there is a comment period, then a final rulemaking, which could take a year. Don't wait, get your hearing checked. Encourage those you know to do the same. Protect the hearing you do have. Here are some good resources.

Video: [Hearing Aids, Over-the-Counter, Direct to Consumer and Connectivity](#) by Thomas Powers, Ph.D., from the HLAA Virtual 2021 Convention.

### East Bay Leadership Team

The chapter is run by a Steering Committee, Leader Dale Davis, [ddavis94605@gmail.com](mailto:ddavis94605@gmail.com), who also oversees the Membership Database.

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### JOIN THE NATIONAL HEARING LOSS ASSOCIATION – THEY ARE ADVOCATING FOR YOU!

Go to this URL to join today: <https://www.hearingloss.org/make-an-impact/become-a-memberrenew/>

**OR**, if you prefer to pay by check or card thru the mail, Nancy Asmundson has membership forms to send to you, or contact HLAA at 301-657-2248 or e-mail [membership@hearingloss.org](mailto:membership@hearingloss.org). Your membership form & payment go to HLAA, 6116 Executive Blvd., Suite 320, Rockville, MD 20852.

**COSTS:** Regular Membership/year (will receive *Hearing Life* magazine in print and digital format):

Individual - \$45; Couple/Family - \$55; Professional - \$80; Nonprofit - \$80;

Online Membership receives *Hearing Life* mag. in digital format only: Individual - \$35; Student - \$25.

Veteran Membership: Complimentary one-year Regular Membership & Lifetime Online Membership.