



# East Bay Chapter: Newsletter ☞ March 2024 ☛

Chapter E-mail: [info@hearinglosseb.org](mailto:info@hearinglosseb.org)  
Chapter Address: PO Box 2266, Alameda, CA  
94501

## **URGENT!**

**We are looking for a person to assist our Program Chair, Robin Miller, in finding and scheduling speakers for future meetings.** The speaker at our programs is the main reason our meetings are so interesting and insightful. The job is a collaboration between Robin and the candidate. If you are interested, please contact Robin Miller <[robin@robinmillerlaw.com](mailto:robin@robinmillerlaw.com)> right away!

**Our March Meeting will be held Saturday, March 9. This will be a Hybrid (available in person and by Zoom) meeting event. For those who attend in person, refreshments will be served courtesy of our chapter! Even though the speaker will be presented by Zoom and projected on a big screen, this is a great opportunity to meet and talk with your fellow HLAA members before and after the presentation.**

### **TOPIC: Caption in Glasses!**

This month's presentation will be about exciting new hearing assistive technology. Riley Ellingsen, Co-founder and CEO of heARsight, will introduce us to new Augmented Reality glasses that will provide captions literally before your very eyes. Please join us to learn more about heARsight and this new invention.

**You're welcome to come socialize at 9:30 a.m.; Meeting begins at 10:00 a.m. The meeting will be held at the Kaiser Fabiola Building, 3801 Howe Street, Oakland, in the basement. Take elevator down to basement, turn right down the hall to the end, Room G26. **FREE PARKING** is available at the parking structure across the street. Just park in an available slot and walk across the street to the Fabiola Building.**

***Social time: 9:30 a.m. Meeting begins: 10 a.m.***

**Register for this free event** [www.HearingLossEB.org](http://www.HearingLossEB.org) and click on "Monthly Meeting". Once you register, you'll be sent the link to join the meeting.

**HLAA-EB posts our newsletters to the California State Association webpage and a link on our website. VOLUNTEER! Contact us to let us know you are available!** Check out our website at: <http://www.hearinglosseb.org/> Contact us at: [info@hearinglosseb.org](mailto:info@hearinglosseb.org)

**Upcoming Meetings: April: An Audiologist (tba)**

**May: Walk for Hearing, May 19, at Crab Cove, Alameda (see flyer below)**

**June: Claudia Marseille will talk about her memoir**

**July & August: Summer break! No meetings.**



Wishing you “Lá fhéile Pádraig sona dhaibh” – Happy Saint Patrick’s Day.

### **2024 HLAA CONVENTION NEWS- June 26 – 29, 2024**

Are you interested in attending the HLAA Convention 2024? If so, pay attention as Early Bird sign-ups have begun. This year's Convention will be June 26 - 29 in Phoenix, Arizona at the Sheraton Grand in Wild Horse Pass. Much more convenient for us West Coasters! (The last few Conventions have been in East Coast or Southeast Coast cities.)

Exciting News! Your HLAA-East Bay Chapter is providing stipends to those interested in attending! More information on the convention is at this link: [HLAA 2024 Convention - Hearing Loss Association of America](#). Go ahead and sign up early (Early Bird prices: \$375/person or \$675/couple paid by March 31, 2024). 2 stipends of \$500 each will be available this year on a reimbursement basis after attendance at the Convention is verified. These stipends are for HLAA-East Bay Chapter members ONLY. (Membership for one year is only \$15). A Reminder of the guidelines for participating and an application were sent out mid-February. **Applications for the \$500 stipends are due March 31, 2024.** Did you get it? If not, please e-mail me, Nancy Asmundson, at [nasmundson@comcast.net](mailto:nasmundson@comcast.net) or [info@hearinglosseb.org](mailto:info@hearinglosseb.org). I will be happy to send you the guidelines and application. I went to the convention in Rochester, NY, in 2018 and had a wonderful experience. Questions? Contact me: [nasmundson@comcast.net](mailto:nasmundson@comcast.net)

### **MEETING NOTES: “Cochlear Implants Informational”**

At our February 10., 2024, HLAA-EB Chapter meeting, our guest speaker was Audrey Staley, who is a Cochlear Implant Consumer Specialist for the Northwest Region of Advanced Bionics (AB), one of the three companies authorized to sell cochlear implants in the United States. Initially, Audrey set out the following agenda for her presentation: Hearing Loss Statistics and Description; Hearing Aids to Cochlear Implant Candidacy; Description of a Cochlear Implant and Its Components; How A Cochlear Implant Works; Advanced Bionics Hearing Success Tips & Resources; and Audrey’s Contact Information at Advanced Bionics. Audrey concluded her presentation with a Question & Answer Session. She accompanied her presentation with several illustrative PowerPoint slides, short videos, and hands-on demonstrations of cochlear implants and accessories.



**Hearing Loss (HL) Statistics and Description:** Audrey started off her presentation by citing some surprising statistics from HLAA that 48-million Americans currently experience some level of hearing

loss (HL). However, only about 20% of those individuals are getting the amplification or hearing support they need. In fact, hearing loss is the 3<sup>rd</sup> most common disability. A brief summary of common HL issues & terminology is provided below:

**Types of Hearing Loss:** There are three basic types of HL

- **Conductive Hearing Loss** occurs when sound is not sent easily through the outer ear canal to the eardrum and the tiny bones of the middle ear, which makes sounds softer and less easy to hear. Some possible causes of this type of HL are ear infection fluid in the middle ear from colds or allergies, too much earwax, hole in the eardrum, etc. and can often be corrected medically or surgically.
- **Sensorineural Hearing Loss (SNHL)** occurs when there is damage to the inner ear (cochlea) or to the nerve pathways from the inner ear to the brain, which reduces the ability to hear faint sounds and often results in speech being unclear or sound muffled. Some possible causes of SNHL are toxic drugs, genetic or hereditary HL, aging, exposure to loud noise and head trauma. SNHL generally cannot be medically or surgically corrected and is the most common type of permanent HL.
- **Mixed Hearing Loss** occurs when a conductive hearing loss happens in combination with a SNHL with damage in the outer or middle ear and also in the inner ear or auditory nerve.

**Degree of Hearing Loss:** The level of hearing loss is typically reported in degree/range of hearing loss.

- **Degree of Hearing Loss** refers to the severity of the hearing loss. When one's hearing does not meet the standard for normal, then the individual's hearing loss is classified as slight, mild, moderate, moderately severe, severe, profound, or deaf.
- **Hearing Loss Range (dB HL)** is a classification system of numbers which represent a patient's hearing loss range in decibels and used to identify the extent of the patient's hearing loss.

**Configuration of Hearing Loss:** The configuration or shape of the hearing loss refers to the degree and pattern of hearing loss across high vs. low frequencies (tones) and typically is illustrated in an **audiogram**.

**Other Descriptors of Hearing Loss:** Other terms used to describe an individual's hearing loss include:

- **Bilateral vs. Unilateral Hearing Loss:** HL in both ears vs. HL in one ear.
- **Symmetrical vs. Asymmetrical Hearing Loss:** Same or different HL degree & configuration in each ear.
- **Progressive vs. Sudden Hearing Loss:** HL that becomes worse over time vs. HL that happens quickly.
- **Fluctuating vs. Stable Hearing Loss:** HL that changes over time vs. HL that remains the same over time.

**Hearing Aids to Cochlear Implant Candidacy:** Audrey explained that the type of hearing loss, the degree and configuration of hearing loss, as well as several other factors, will likely impact the choice and one's eligibility for hearing aids (HA's) vs. cochlear implants (CI's). Audrey proceeded in describing the detailed evaluation process that is followed to determine whether an individual meets the eligibility standards used to qualify for cochlear implants. She noted that in the past, the degree of HL had to be at least very severe or profound. More recently, the CI standards have been expanded to qualify more persons for CI's. Now, a person's pure tone hearing average must be greater than or equal to 60 decibels, and/or alternatively, speech understanding is less than 60%. Other factors, such as difficulty

communicating in a quiet environment and the impact HL has on one's quality of life, may also be taken into consideration during the audiologist's initial evaluation prior to referral for further CI evaluation.

After the initial evaluation and referral by an individual's audiologist, the CI team evaluation process continues with the audiologist, surgeon, social worker, and others. If the individual qualifies for CI's, then a Cochlear Implant Consumer Specialist, like Audrey Staley, is assigned to the case to help make plans & guide the CI process. Audrey walked us through the next steps that follow: Surgery is scheduled (generally, 1-3 hrs. as outpatient surgery and recovery); Initial CI activation (1-4 weeks later CI patient has one-on-one appt. for 2 hrs. at AB clinic for testing & activation of CI's); Programming appt. in 1-3 months to make adjustments in the device; Future appts. are spread out longer as needed. Audrey clarified that this is simply an example of the typical steps that the CI process takes, but may vary according to the patient's needs and other considerations that may arise along the way.

**Description of a Cochlear Implant and Its Components:** After reminding us of how hearing works, Audrey defined and demonstrated a cochlear implant and its components. A cochlear implant is a system that restores hearing by sending sound signals directly to the hearing nerve.

According to Audrey and Advanced Bionics' distributed literature, Advanced Bionics and Phonak have now partnered as sister companies in order to ". . . offer the widest range of solutions to help each patient overcome their unique hearing challenges, and fully connect to the life they love."

The Advanced Bionics + Phonak cochlear implant relies on the following components:

- ✓ One or more microphones to help you hear the full range of sound.
- ✓ Sound processor, as recognized by the FDA, which filters sound signals particularly in noise.
- ✓ Headpiece which sends the sound signal from the sound processor to the implant under the skin.
- ✓ Multi-magnet assembly that connects the headpiece to the implant.
- ✓ A performance-focused implant ready for the future.
- ✓ Electrode array in the inner ear sending filtered sound signals to help understand speech & enjoy music.

**How A Cochlear Implant Works:** Referring to her PowerPoint slides and AB + Phonak literature, Audrey next described how a cochlear implant works, breaking the process down into the following steps:

- The microphones capture sound waves that pass through the air.
- The sound waves are converted into detailed digital information by the sound processor.
- The magnetic headpiece sends the digital signals to the implant.
- The implant takes the signal to the hearing nerve.
- The hearing nerve sends impulses to the brain, where they are interpreted as sound.

**Hearing Success Tips:** Audrey & AB literature have provided some tips for CI success, as follows:

- ✚ **Consistent CI Use.** Wear your processor for as long as you can every day to help your brain adjust.
- ✚ **Hear with Two Ears.** Wear a CI in both ears or a CI in one ear & a compatible HA in the other ear.
- ✚ **Reach Out for Help.** Get motivated & gain support from hearing organizations, family & friends.
- ✚ **Go Find the Noise.** When not recognizing a sound, search out & identify the sound as your brain adjusts.

🚩 **Practice, Practice, Practice.** Make time to practice on your own, with a partner or in a group.

**Wrap-Up:** Our guest speaker Audrey Staley concluded her excellent informative presentation on cochlear implants (CI's) by holding a Q & A session and an up-close CI demonstration. She also provided a list of Advanced Bionics resources with many CI tools & practice exercises. Finally, she extended an invitation to anyone interested to contact her by email or phone for further information or questions about Advanced Bionics & cochlear implants.

- ❖ **AB Marvel CI Wireless Solutions**
- ❖ **AB Remote App**
- ❖ **AB Hearing Success Portal at [HearingSuccess.com](https://www.hearingsuccess.com)**
- ❖ **[www.startmyabonline.com](https://www.startmyabonline.com)**

**For More Information/Questions: Email: [audreanna.staley@advancedbionics.com](mailto:audreanna.staley@advancedbionics.com)  
Call: (661) 289-0353**

~ Kathy Fairbanks

#### QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY AUDREY STALEY AFTER THE PRESENTATION

C. O. and J.R.: Will CI's be able to accommodate the using of "Auracast"— the new technology coming? What about backwards compatibility with Auracast?

- **AB currently offers universal Bluetooth connectivity to any Bluetooth capable device now! The current Marvel device is set up for Bluetooth Classic and Bluetooth LE. The Marvel is not currently able to work with Auracast. As you may know, CI processors are updated about every 5 or so years. The Marvel was released in 2021, so we would expect a new processor from AB around 2026. Being AB was and is the first and only CI company to offer universal Bluetooth connectivity, I would anticipate up to date connectivity to remain with future technologies. Have you been able to use Auracast? Where have you seen it available?**

C.O.: Many people have told me they qualify medically for CI—but Medicare won't approve it—so the cost prohibits it. Any comments?

- **If insurance denies an authorization request, there is a possibility for an appeal. This would be completed by the clinic. If coverage is not available, there are some local organizations that can potentially assist in costs.**

G.D.: Do all CI use a behind the earpiece? / G.D.: Are there some devices that don't use a behind the earpiece?

- **The AB CI Marvel is designed to be worn on the ear. However, we do offer several wearing styles that keep the processor off the ear. To discuss these options, please reach out!**

C.O.: How far away are you from doing a fully implantable CI?

- **I am unable to speak to future innovations and product design, but we are constantly looking to advance our technologies and offer new solutions.**

J.R.: Can you comment on candidacy thresholds used by VA compared with what you showed in your presentation. I have high frequency sensorineural hearing loss with an average of about 80 dB and speech recognition in the low 30s. I have only a moderate loss at low frequency which disqualifies me from CI candidacy (so I've heard).

J.R.: Additionally, I'm told I could benefit from a hybrid system thus using my low frequency hearing. Could you comment on the availability of hybrid system?

- **AB has an acoustic ear hook that can be used to aid low frequency hearing. We also have surgical tools that can be used during the procedure to aid the surgeon in protecting the cochlea structures.**

C.O.: Do CI's accommodate telecoil?

- **The AB CI Marvel can accommodate telecoil. So does the Phonak Naida Link M hearing aid, which would be used with our bimodal solution.**

**GET READY! WALK4HEARING IS COMING!**



*Together, we're bringing hope to hearing loss.*



## **Bay Area Walk4Hearing**

**Sunday May 19, 2024**

**📍 Robert W. Crown Memorial  
State Beach**

8th Street, Otis Drive  
Alameda, CA

9:00 am - Registration  
10:30 am - Stage presentation  
10:45 am - Walk begins



**Scan to Register today  
or visit [walk4hearing.org](http://walk4hearing.org)**

**👤 Walk Manager: Ronnie Adler**

**✉ [radler@hearingloss.org](mailto:radler@hearingloss.org)**

## JOKE CORNER

1. **Did you hear the rumor about butter?** Well, I'm not going to spread it!
2. **Did you hear about the Irishman who was impervious to bullets?** His name was Rick O'Shea
3. **What's the worst thing to hear during open heart surgery?** Anything
4. **Did you hear about what happened to the really offensive joke about cows?** [removed]
5. **Did you hear about the pessimist who hates sausage?** They say he fears the wurst.

**We need your help! Can you volunteer? Contact us at: [info@hearinglosseb.org](mailto:info@hearinglosseb.org)**

Here is a list of volunteer positions we are seeking to fill:

- **Zoom Assistant** - Assist George Chin, Sr. to run Zoom, cameras, and PA/Audio Loop during in person/hybrid meetings.
- **Google Contacts Assistant**: Assist George Chin, Sr. to maintain our Google Contacts based email distribution information. Basic level Excel skills helpful.
- **Volunteer Coordinator**: Contact people who said they could volunteer and tell them about volunteer needs. Recruit for those positions.
- **Outreach Coordinator**: Organize a table for our chapter at various street fairs and other venues. Set up the table. Recruit volunteers to help with the events. Reach out to people who participate in our meetings. Let people know about our chapter.
- **Program Team**: Work with Robin Miller to contact potential speakers and arrange for them to speak at one of our meetings.
- **Just want to help?** All of our committees need helpers! All volunteers are welcome!

### ***East Bay Leadership Team***

The chapter is run by a Steering Committee, Acting Leader: Len Bridges  
Outreach, National Chapter Coordinator/Liaison: Linda Gee, [linda.gee4@gmail.com](mailto:linda.gee4@gmail.com)  
Treasurer: Len Bridges, [lenbridges3993-hlaa@outlook.com](mailto:lenbridges3993-hlaa@outlook.com)  
Programs: Robin Miller, [robin@robinmillerlaw.com](mailto:robin@robinmillerlaw.com)  
Technology: George Chin, Sr., [georgechinsr@gmail.com](mailto:georgechinsr@gmail.com)  
Membership: Connie Gee, [cbgee2014@yahoo.com](mailto:cbgee2014@yahoo.com); Marlene Muir, [muircmc@comcast.net](mailto:muircmc@comcast.net)  
Volunteer Coordinator: (need a volunteer)  
Newsletter Editors: Nancy Asmundson, [nasmundson@comcast.net](mailto:nasmundson@comcast.net); Kathy Fairbanks, [mkathyfairbanks@att.net](mailto:mkathyfairbanks@att.net)  
Publicity: Marlene Muir, [muircmc@comcast.net](mailto:muircmc@comcast.net); George Chin, Sr., [georgechinsr@gmail.com](mailto:georgechinsr@gmail.com)  
Technical/Audio Loop: Peter G. Townsend, [peterg.townsend@gmail.com](mailto:peterg.townsend@gmail.com)  
Website updates: George Chin, Sr., [georgechinsr@gmail.com](mailto:georgechinsr@gmail.com); Peter G. Townsend, [peterg.townsend@gmail.com2](mailto:peterg.townsend@gmail.com2)

***JOIN HEARING LOSS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA (HLAA) – THEY ADOCATÉ FOR YOU!***  
[hearingloss.org](http://hearingloss.org) Membership is now open to all of our valued supporters who help fuel our mission and change the lives of people with hearing loss. **Everyone who gives is now an HLAA member, helping to amplify our HLAA voice, and fulfill our important mission— together!**

**COST OF MEMBERSHIP:** FREE! However, if you donate \$45/year, a copy of *Hearing Life* magazine will be mailed to you! Otherwise, all donations are always appreciated!

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