



# East Bay Chapter:Newsletter October 2024



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

## October 12 Meeting: Over-the-counter (OTC) hearing aids from the consumer perspective with Steve Luzmoor

For the next October 12th HLAA-EB meeting, new chapter member Steve Luzmoor will give an overview from the perspective of a consumer about over-the-counter (OTC) hearing aids, how they may be an option for people with mild-moderate hearing loss, and useful resources for learning more. Steve will share his own recent experience purchasing an OTC product programmed by the company using the audiogram from his audiologist, with product support and adjustments handled by a mix of Zoom calls and Email. There will be a Q/A session after the presentation, and Steve can answer questions about the OTC hearing aids he purchased, which are closely integrated with the Apple iPhone he also uses. Steve is a retired computer programmer and amateur musician whose mother attended HLAA-EB meetings for many years. He ended up with OTC hearing aids after being tested by an audiologist at the insistence of his wife and children who complained about him speaking too loudly and turning the TV volume up too high.

### Event Details:

- Date: Saturday, October 12, 2024
- Time: 9:30 Social; 10:00 Meeting; and 11:30 Lunch
- Location: Oakland Kaiser Fabiola Building, 3801 Howe Street, Room G26
- Cost: Free

While this session is a hybrid meeting, we encourage you to attend in person for an engaging and informative experience. Enjoy our usual morning coffee and bagels, and stick around for pizza lunch (**PIZZA!**) after the presentation. We're looking forward to seeing you there!

**Please RSVP via the link below by close of business on Thursday, October 10, to reserve a spot:**  
[Home \(hearinglosseb.org\)](http://www.hearinglosseb.org) Click on "Monthly Meetings"

**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)

**November Program: November 9, 2024:** Dr. Susanna Storm, AuD from Blue Sky Hearing will present "Navigating the Soundscape: Innovations in Hearing Aid Technology and Beyond". Dr. Storm will explore the latest advancements in hearing aids and related technology, as well as other hearing technologies to improve the auditory experience.

## MEETING NOTES: “A Panel Discussion: Highlights of the 2024 Annual HAAA Convention”

At our September 14, 2024, HAAA-EB Chapter meeting, five guest speakers served on a panel, reporting on many of the highlights of the Annual HAAA Convention held at the Sheraton Grand at Wild Horse Pass, Phoenix, Arizona, running from June 26-29, 2024. Each of the five panelists, including Linda Gee, Verna Dow, and Connie Gee from the East Bay (EB) Chapter, Sara Oser from the North Bay (NB) Chapter, and Ann Thomas from the Diablo Valley (DV) Chapter, currently serve as leaders in their local HAAA Chapters. After a brief self-introduction, each one gave a short 10-15 minute overview



Linda Gee, Sara Oser, Ann Thomas, Connie Gee at the Convention, June, 2024

of two or three convention sessions which they had personally attended, as well as offering some of the key information about hearing loss that they felt was important to share with us. The Powerpoint slides, colorful pictures, fascinating stories of social activities and people they met from across the country made this fast-moving, tightly organized panel discussion with just enough time left for a question & answer session at the end.

**Summary of the Panelists’ Presentations & Discussion:** One by one, each panelist first introduced herself by name, her HAAA leadership roles, and then a little about her own background in dealing with hearing loss and how she connected with HAAA, as well as other useful resources:

- **Linda Gee:** HAAA East Bay Chapter Member; HAAA-EB Outreach Coordinator & Liaison; Moderator of this Panel Discussion.
  - ✓ *Linda joined HAAA-EB after attending the 2023 Walk4Hearing. She soon thereafter started serving on the EB Steering Committee (SC) as its Outreach Coordinator & EB Chapter Liaison. This was Linda’s first time attending the HAAA Convention.*
  - ✓ *Highlight 1: Keynote Speaker Shanna Adamic. Linda introduced us to the Keynote Speaker, Shanna Adamic, of the 2024 HAAA Convention, who is the Executive Director of the Oracle Health Foundation. As an NFL cheerleader for the KC Chiefs for nearly a decade, she developed a brain tumor with only 4% chance of gaining basic functions, followed by surgery that left her deaf in one ear. Yet, Shanna did not let this hearing loss hold her back and spoke of her belief in the power of “I will” and audacious optimism, described in her book The Power of Audacious Optimism (release date Dec. 17, 2024). She went on to explain how Oracle Health Foundation works on removing barriers to essential healthcare for children around the world.*
  - ✓ *Highlight 2: “Embracing Auracast” Workshop. Thomas Kaufman described how Auracast technology makes sound available from various venues. Auracast is a new protocol from Bluetooth that allows shared audio experiences. Imagine tuning into a muted TV in a doctor’s waiting room or streaming a theater performance directly into your hearing aids or headphones. The innovation will be helpful to anyone with a pair of Bluetooth headphones but might be especially exciting for those with hearing loss. This new, exciting technology will transform how you listen to audio through your hearing technology*

*in the coming years. It should be viewed as a catalyst for expanding hearing accessibility. Comparing the onset and development of electric vehicles to Auracast capable hearing devices, Speaker Kaufman noted that Auracast is still in the early stages and may take decades to become pervasive. Nevertheless, Auracast technology should be embraced since this technology could potentially revolutionize access to better hearing. Several Auracast deployment challenges remain, including everybody needing to buy new hearing instruments, needing to connect with a smartphone, lacking delay compensation in large venues (echo), and unknown performance in crowded spaces. More info about Auracast hearing aids: [How Auracast and Bluetooth LE Will Change Hearing Aids \(soundly.com\)](https://www.soundly.com/auracast-and-bluetooth-le-will-change-hearing-aids)*

➤ **Verna Dow: HLAA East Bay Chapter Member; HLAA-EB Program Coordinator.**

- ✓ *Verna described her long difficult journey in living with profound hearing loss and began researching the possibility of getting a cochlear implant. She attended the 2018 HLAA Convention. She was connected with a Cochlear Implant (CI) in Dec., 2023, which has allowed her to move from hearing 20% of words clearly to hearing 80% words clearly with better hearing of sentences in background noise. She has recently rejoined HLAA and now became the newest member of our Steering Committee (SC) where she will assist our Program Coordinator Robin Miller in arranging program speakers for our monthly EB Ch. Meetings. She attended the 2024 HLAA Convention in Phoenix where she enjoyed the sense of purpose, inclusion, support, and valuable information about hearing loss.*
- ✓ *Highlight 1: “Parents of Children with Hearing Loss” Panel Discussion. Although Verna hadn’t planned on attending this workshop, she did so on a whim. She discovered that the parents of children with hearing loss are a very dedicated and supportive group who are interested in sharing ideas and experiences. She said that she learned that many children are misdiagnosed with ADD, ADHD, inattentive, disinterested, behavior problems and slow when the actual problem was a hearing loss. Once hearing loss is diagnosed, the families need to work with several disciplines, including Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) doctors, audiologist, speech & language therapy and maintain continual communication with the school in creating an Individual Education Program (IEP) for the child. Children with hearing loss become tired and stressed while trying to hear, needing more naps, more quiet time, more time alone, less stimulus, whatever makes the child feel calm. Parents were reminded that they are the best advocate for their children so they should trust their instincts and advocate for their needs.*
- ✓ *Highlight 2: “Assistive Technology Devices” Panel Discussion. This workshop was a panel discussion by representatives from several communication technology companies who described and demonstrated some of their assistive technology devices with features which might be especially helpful to persons with hearing loss. Several of these products and their features are presented below:*
  - *T-Mobile: Different communication styles; speech recognition for impediments/accents; video relay service/video/voice cell users.*
  - *Samsung: Live transcribe/live captions; using AI, train speech patterns for persons with speech impediments & accents.*
  - *Verizon: Accessibility training for all hires; screen magnification & screen readers; Braille keyboard.*

- AT&T: Gallaudet University/drop down caption screens; Can Go Smart Cane in its handle.
- Google Research Initiative is working to make speech impediment/recognition more accessible.
- Bell & Symfon: Alarm clock & doorbell alerts/sound, light & vibration; smoke alarm system/strobe lights; various listening systems.
- InnoCaption: Cell phone captioning and transcribing for both you & person calling.
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➤ **Connie Gee: HLAA East Bay Chapter Member; HLAA-EB Membership Chair**

- ✓ *Connie is a member of our HLAA-EB Chapter. She serves as our East Bay Chapter Membership Chair of our Steering Committee, recording and maintaining information securely on all current and new members of our EB Chapter.*
- ✓ *Highlight 1: Dr. Cliff Olson, AuD, emphasized the importance of audiologists following best practices, such as recording hearing tests. conducting speech in noise tests, using real ear measurements, and validated outcome measures questionnaires to evaluate and verify hearing aid effectiveness.*
- ✓ *Highlight 2: “Hear & Beyond: Live Skillfully with Hearing Loss”: This was a book review and commentary by authors Shari Eberts & Gael Hannan. The two HLAA leaders focused on the theme of making a mindshift by changing one’s emotional attitude about hearing loss to acceptance and adaptation. They suggested using a few technology tools available to boost comprehension and changing one’s communication behaviors.*

➤ **Sara Oser: HLAA North Bay Chapter President; HLAA 2024 Community Service Award. Recipient**

- ✓ *Sara is currently serving as the President of the HLAA North Bay California Chapter. She received the HLAA 2024 Award for her community service., including outreach events, HOPE support groups, presentations to senior communities, honored by the Board of Supervisors for advocating for communication access, offering hearing loss marketing tools such as bookmarks & pins, and an E-newsletter.*
- ✓ *Highlight 1: “Community Service & Marketing Tools for Community Hearing Loss Outreach”. Expressing gratitude for being honored as a recipient of a HLAA 2024 Community Service Award, Sara wished to share some of the many hearing loss outreach events in the North Bay in which she has been involved: senior expos. outdoor health fairs, HOPE support groups & senior communities, and Marin County Board of Supervisors. Sara also shared samples of some of the possible outreach marketing tools that might be distributed at these events: bookmarks, pins and HLAA newsletter.*
- ✓ *Highlight 2 : “Exhibit Hall Sample Materials Sara visited the HLAA Convention Exhibit Hall and wanted to share some of the many wonderful examples of hearing loss materials that might be used by local HLAA groups, including postings of hearing loss symptoms & strategies for hard-of-hearing folks, sample signs to notify an officer and others of your hearing loss, signs to alert persons to easy captioning, as well as many hearing loss digital photo resources and potential speakers for chapter meetings.*

➤ **Ann Thomas—HLAA Brand Ambassador; HLAA Get in the Hearing Loop (GITHL) Committee Member; HLAA Diablo Valley Chapter President; EB Ch. Member**

- ✓ *Ann has been involved with HLAA for many years while taking on many leadership roles in HLAA at the federal, state and local chapter level. She currently serves as President of the Diablo Valley (DV) Chapter and continues to give presentations on a variety of hearing loss topics at other HLAA chapters as well as many community organizations.*
- ✓ *Highlight 1: HLAA GITHL Annual Meeting. As a member of the HLAA GITHL Committee, Ann attended their GITHL Annual Meeting. She reminded us that a hearing loop is a wireless transmission from a sound system to hearing aids or cochlear implant processors which are equipped with a telecoil. Hearing loops are designed for fixed seating venues and must be professionally installed. The hearing loop is an example of an accommodation which should be requested and provided since they can transform public assistive listening into greater communication access to people with hearing loss*
- ✓ *Highlight 2: “Hearing loss is a Disability”: Federal and state laws such as the Americans with Disabilities ACT (ADA) provide disability rights for individuals with hearing loss. Therefore, we should advocate for ourselves and all those with hearing loss to acquire the accommodations we need to fully participate in public life. This includes asking for communication access when traveling. For example: Print the TSA Disability Card ([TSA Disability Notification Card](#)). Request any needed assistance or accommodations from the airline when making your reservation. Notify the agent at the gate of your disability status so you can pre-board and settle in your seat early. Notify the flight attendant after boarding the airplane.*

**Summary of the Panelists’ Presentations & Discussion**

- **Wrap-Up:** Our five guest panelists wrapped up their 10 to 15-minute highlight presentations in a timely fashion so there was adequate time for a short follow-up Q & A session. At this time, audience members directed their questions to the entire panel or in some cases to an individual panelist. The questions and comments from the audience ranged from expressions of difficulty in affording hearing aids, to the challenges they had faced with hearing in public settings such as theaters and airports. After responding to the audience questions, the panelists wrapped their discussion up with upbeat comments about their overall positive experiences during the 4 days of attending many of the 30+ workshops offered. The attendees also commented on the wonderful connections they had made with many of the 500 Convention attendees who are HLAA leaders from across the country. The panelists noted that not only had they learned a lot about so many hearing loss topics, but also greatly appreciated the live captioning in all meeting sessions, hearing loops in all meeting rooms with Auracast in some rooms, and product demonstrations during break time in the Exhibit Hall. Finally, each panelist expressed how much they enjoyed the social activities and lovely 2024 HLAA Convention setting in Phoenix, Arizona.

**For More Information and/or Questions: Email: any of our HLAA Chapter Leader Panelists  
Kathy Fairbanks**

**After reading this article or experiencing the program, are you inspired to go to the next HLAA Convention in June, 2025?**

**In January or February we’ll be offering stipends again! Watch this space!**

**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.
- **Camera Operator** - Use a remote control to operate our 2 cameras for in-person Zoom meetings.
- **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.
- **Just want to help?** All of our committees need helpers! All volunteers are welcome! Contact us and we'll help you figure out what would be a good fit for you.

### ***HLAA SF/East Bay Leaders***

Our Steering Committee, Leader: Len Bridges, [lenbridges3993-hlaa@outlook.com](mailto:lenbridges3993-hlaa@outlook.com)  
Outreach National Chapter Coordinator/Liaison: Linda Gee, [linda@hearinglosseb.org](mailto:linda@hearinglosseb.org)  
Treasurer: Len Bridges, [lenbridges3993-hlaa@outlook.com](mailto:lenbridges3993-hlaa@outlook.com)  
Programs: Robin Miller, [robin@robinmillerlaw.com](mailto:robin@robinmillerlaw.com), Verna Dow, [vbdow@comcast.net](mailto:vbdow@comcast.net)  
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: Linda Gee, [linda@hearinglosseb.org](mailto:linda@hearinglosseb.org)  
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.com](mailto:peterg.townsend@gmail.com)  
Consulting Legal Counsel: Gerald Niesar, [gniesar@nvlawllp.com](mailto:gniesar@nvlawllp.com)  
Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) services: Audrey Spinka, [captionit@gmail.com](mailto:captionit@gmail.com)

### ***JOIN HEARING LOSS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA (HLAA) – THEY ADVOCATE 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:** The HLAA national office had consolidated the donation and membership processes. Presently, anyone who donates as little as \$1 would become a member of the national HLAA. Additionally, with a donation of \$45 annually, individuals have the option to receive a hard copy of the Hearing Life magazine from the national office.