



East Bay Chapter Newsletter



October 2026

Chapter E-mail: Info@HearingLossEB.org
Chapter Address: PO Box 2266,
Alameda, CA 94501

Hello Fall!

HAVE YOU BEEN TO OUR NEW LOCATION? KAISER HOSPITAL, 3600 BROADWAY, OAKLAND, ROOM LL-B. COME IN PERSON THIS MONTH! EVERYONE LOVES IT!

***Next Hearing Loss Association East Bay Educational Meeting,
Saturday, October 10, 2026:***

Speaker: Ann Thomas, N. California Chapters Coordinator – Assistive Listening System Presentation. **Ann Thomas** is a dedicated advocate for people with hearing loss and a personal user of dual cochlear implants. She serves the [Hearing Loss Association of America \(HLAA\)](https://www.hearingloss.org/) in multiple leadership roles, including **HLAA Brand Ambassador**, President of the Diablo Valley Chapter, and Northern California Chapter Coordinator. Her extensive dedication to promoting accessibility has earned her the prestigious **Hamilton Relay Better Hearing & Speech Award**, and she has authored several foundational advocacy guides on hearing loops and disability rights.

Welcome to the fifth meeting of our 40th Anniversary series.

Please register at: www.HearingLossEB.org

RSVP by: Friday, Oct. 9, 2026, 5:00 p.m.

Schedule:

- **9:30 AM: Social and Refreshments**
- **10:00 AM: Presentation (Zoomers can join at 10 AM)**
- **11:30 AM: Complimentary Pizza**

NEW LOCATION: Kaiser Permanente Oakland Medical Center, [3600 Broadway](#), Lower Level Conference Room LL-B, Oakland CA 94611

Parking Option 1: Free parking across the street from the Kaiser Fabiola Building at the [3780 Howe St. Parking Garage](#). Walk half a block to the North Entrance of the Oakland Medical Center at [275 West MacArthur Blvd.](#) (See more information on the next page)

Parking Option 2: The first two hours are free at the Kaiser Oakland Medical Center, [3510 Broadway Parking Garage](#); each additional 30 minutes costs \$1, with a maximum daily charge of \$18 after five hours.

Direction: Once inside the Oakland Medical Center, take any elevator to the Lower Level. Follow the signs to the Lower Level (LL) Conference Rooms. Our meeting will be held in Conference Room LL-B.

The meeting is available both In-Person and Virtual (Zoom Webinar).

Questions? Info@HearingLossEB.org

HAA-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

NOTE: Donate old hearing aids or assistive technology items. Drop them off at a meeting and we will make sure your items get new life for someone else.

Coming Soon:

We are lucky to have Brooke Barry, Robin Miller, and Verna Dow, organizing our speakers! We have speakers planned through the end of the year!

- October 10, 2026: Ann Thomas, Assistive Listening Systems
- November 14, 2026: Pamela Durkin, Canine Companions
- December 12, 2026: Christine Lim, Visiting an ENT

Celebrate the 250th Anniversary of the USA!

Celebrate our Chapter's 40th Anniversary!

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Thank you Dr. Susanna Storm for your generous sponsorship!



Dr. Susanna Storm, audiologist and owner of Blue Sky Hearing, has dedicated her career to expanding access to compassionate, evidence-based hearing care.



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THANK YOU TO OUR INDIVIDUAL SPONSORS:

- Thank you, Mike Miles! For your generous sponsorship! HLAA Chester County PA Chapter, Outreach and Scholarship Coordinator
- Rube Warren, in honor of Len Bridges
- Jasmin and Jay Mumford, The Jasmin and Jay Giving Fund
- Len and Sophie Bridges, Honoring serving our chapter
- Larry and Linda Gee, Proud of HLAA-EBC accomplishments over 40 years!
- An anonymous donor, identifies as Linda Gee's friend
- Verna Dow, Grateful for the information and support over the years
- Wendy Sanda, Realtor



CONSIDER A SPONSORSHIP DURING OUR 40TH YEAR!

In 2026, we proudly celebrate our chapter's 40th anniversary--four decades of education, advocacy, and support for our hearing loss communities.

We invite you to join us and become a sponsor in honoring our past while strengthening our programs for the future, as we can continue making a meaningful difference for the hearing loss communities we serve.

For sponsorship information, please access the link on our [website](#).

MEETING NOTES: "The Power in Your Pocket or Purse: An Overview of Assistive & Access Technologies Available to Persons with Hearing Loss"

At our Sept. 12, 2026 HLAA-East Bay Chapter meeting, our guest speaker was Dr. Tina Gonzales Childress, AuD, CCC-A, who is a late-deafened audiologist and subject-matter expert in assistive and access technologies. With many years of audiology practice behind her, Dr. Childress currently serves as Director of Accessibility at InnoCaption, where she bridges audiology, accessibility, and lived experience.

- **Dr. Tina Childress' Background:** As a late-deafened adult who uses bilateral cochlear implants, Dr. Childress offers quite a unique "dual perspective" as both a hearing professional and also someone who has learned to live with hearing loss. Having lost her own hearing over a 9-month period, she has gained first-hand experience in using assistive technology as a means of successfully coping with hearing loss.



After more than 25 years of professional work as an educational audiologist, Dr. Childress now enjoys serving as Director of Accessibility for the phone captioning service InnoCaption where she has the opportunity to educate both families and professionals about hearing aids, cochlear implants, and a variety of assistive technology apps that are available. Since she is fluent in American Sign Language (ASL), she is able to help bridge the gap between the deaf and hard-of-hearing communities.

Dr. Childress also serves on multiple local and national boards where she advocates for better communication access for individuals with hearing loss. Well-known as “Techie Tina”, Dr. Childress is a sought-after engaging speaker who gladly shares her expertise and offers practical tech tips while emphasizing her goal of “making the complicated simple”.

➤ ***Accessibility Features & Assistive Technologies:*** Dr. Childress provided a detailed overview of accessibility features and assistive technologies that included a side-by-side comparison of Apple iPhone and Android tools and apps that are particularly useful to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

✓ ***Smartphone Accessibility Features—Speech-to-Text and Live Captioning:*** Phone features which turn spoken words into real-time text on screen.

- iPhone: Live Captions.
- Android: Live Transcribe for live conversation; Live Caption for media.

✓ ***Media Captioning and Expressive Captions:***

- iPhone: Live Captions.
- Android: Live Caption for media. Expressive Captions--Enhanced captioning that uses all caps text for yelling, conveying emotion & identifying non-speech sounds such as laughter, applause, or crowd noise.

✓ ***Environmental Sound Awareness and Travel Safety:*** Phone-based tools that can alert users to surrounding sounds when hearing devices are off.

- iPhone: Sound Recognition—iPhone feature that can detect and alert users to specific sounds such as fire alarms, smoke detectors, running water, & doorbells.
- Android: Live Transcribe app has a pop-up box which identifies ambient sounds such as crowd noise.

- Name Detection: Both platforms allow users to enter their name so the phone vibrates when their name is spoken nearby.
- Serene Innovations Phone Cradle (model CA-CX): Senses phone vibrations & activates a bed shaker. Available on Amazon for ~ \$100, but may be available through the California Telephone Distribution Program.

✓ ***Live Listen and Remote Microphone Features:***

- iPhone: Live Listen—iPhone feature that uses the phone as a remote Bluetooth microphone, streaming audio directly to hearing aids or cochlear implants, effectively bringing a distant speaker's voice closer.
- Android: The Android equivalent may not work as well with hearing devices.

✓ ***Text-to-Speech, Personal Voice, and Atypical Speech Support:*** Features allowing users to type responses that are then voiced aloud, or to record and replicate their own voice using AI.

- iPhone: Personal Voice—Users can record their own voice, & AI will replicate it as synthesized output, which is especially useful for persons who have lost or may lose their voice due to medical conditions; Live Speech—Allows users to type text that is then spoken aloud by the phone, using either a synthesized or personal voice; Vocal Shortcuts & Atypical Speech—Settings that help Siri better understand non-standard speech patterns, accents, or voice disorders.
- Android: Live Transcribe. Relate—A Google app now in development designed to improve speech recognition or users with atypical speech.
- Sign Language to Text (Google Pixel 11): A newly released Google feature that recognizes ASL signs via the phone camera & converts them to text.

✓ ***Auracast:*** An emerging Bluetooth technology that will allow a single transmitter (e.g., in a theater, church or public venue) to stream audio to multiple hearing devices simultaneously, replacing traditional loop or IR assistive listening systems. Although both platforms are currently in a waiting period, Dr. Childress anticipates that Auracast will become the dominant standard within the next five years.

➤ ***InnoCaption and Popular Third-Party App Options:***

✓ ***InnoCaption Apps:*** InnoCaption phone captioning apps are free and FCC-certified.

- InnoCaption Phone App: Captions incoming and outgoing phone calls using AI, with the option to switch to a live human CART captioner midcall.

Supports text-to-speech or typed responses. Call transcripts are stored privately on the device & can be summarized using AI.

- InnoCaption Video: A video calling app, released in May 2025, similar to FaceTime, with always-on captions, that are compatible across both iPhone and Android.
- InnoCaption Desktop: Allows users to take captioned calls on a computer for a larger display & keyboard.

✓ ***Third-Party App Options:***

- Bridge: A plug-and-play module that connects to office or multi-line phones, enabling captioning on an iPhone or iPad for workplace settings.
- Snapchat: An on-demand CART captioning marketplace where users can book a remote human captioner with as little as 24 hours' notice, or sessions as short as 30 minutes.
- Otter: Highly accurate speech-to-text that records audio so less private.
- NAL Scribe: Free third-party speech-to-text app for iPhone.
- Flip Talk: A speech-to-text app for iPhone.
- Make It Big: An app for displaying pre-written communication cards.
- Beam Scribe: Allows captioning to be broadcast to users in a different room or location.
- Microsoft Translator/Google Translate: Free translation apps available on both platforms, capable of listening & captioning in multiple languages.

➤ ***Summary of Practical Applications:*** Dr. Childress offered a number of practical applications in using mobile technology to support individuals who are deaf or have some degree of hearing loss.

- ✓ Both iPhone and Android devices have built-in, free accessibility features specifically designed for deaf and hard-of-hearing users.
- ✓ The quality of captions on any device depends heavily on input quality—here's where the basic principle of "garbage in, garbage out" applies.
- ✓ Android's Live Transcribe and Live Caption features were noted as generally more accurate than iPhone's Live Captions for speech-to-text.
- ✓ Accessibility shortcuts by triple clicking on the iPhone or using the floating icon on Android allow users to quickly toggle captioning on and off.
- ✓ Environmental sound awareness features can alert users to fire alarms, running water, crowd noise, & other sounds when hearing devices are off.
- ✓ The Live Listen feature on iPhone turns the phone into a Bluetooth remote microphone that streams directly to compatible hearing aids and cochlear implants.

- ✓ InnoCaption offers captioned phone calls with both AI and live human CART captioner options, a video calling feature, and also a desktop version.
- ✓ Auracast is an emerging Bluetooth standard that will eventually allow hearing devices to connect directly to venue audio systems, but is yet in a transitional stage.
- ✓ Third-party apps such as Otter, NAL Scribe, Flip Talk, Make It Big, Beam Scribe, Microsoft Translator, & Google Translate offer additional captioning & translation options.

➤ ***Media Captioning & Resources to Help Users & Professionals with Mobile Technology:***

- ✓ Most major social media platforms, such as TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter) & Snapchat, have settings to enable automatic captioning.
- ✓ Resource lists are available on her personal website or blog, including:
 - A comprehensive app list organized by category such as accessibility, advocacy, audiology, etc., covering both iPhone & Android.
 - A speech-to-text comparison table listing features across multiple apps & platforms (e.g., free vs. paid, translation capability, & platform compatibility).

➤ ***Wrap-Up:*** In wrapping up her excellent presentation, our speaker Dr. Tina Gonzales Childress confirmed her passion for educating both families and professionals about hearing aids and cochlear implants. She noted that she particularly enjoys sharing her expertise in assistive technology as she advocates for individuals who are deaf or hard-of-hearing and needing support in their daily fight for communication access.



In the time remaining, Dr. Childress opened up the discussion for comments and questions from the audience. She also encouraged audience members to contact her if they want more information or have questions about any of the topics discussed today.

Finally, our HLAA-EB Chapter leadership reminded everyone that the policy of the Chapter is to not endorse any service, product or person that may have been mentioned or discussed during the current presentation, discussion or follow-up Q & A session.

For More Information or Questions: Contact Dr. Tina Gonzales Childress at: tina@innocaption.com or call/text her at (217) 898-0790; Visit her See Hear Communication Matters blog/personal website at: <https://TinaChildressAuD.com>

~ Kathy Fairbanks

Time to renew your membership to our chapter! Only \$25.
Bring a check to the next meeting or go to
hearinglosseb.org/join

HLAA East Bay Leaders

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To Nancy Asmundson, we are deeply grateful for many years of invaluable service on our Board as Co-Director of Newsletters. We wish you the very best as you embark on your next journey.

We need your help! Can you volunteer? Contact us at: info@hearinglosseb.org

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.

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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.

Go to this URL to donate: [Donate Today - Hearing Loss Association of America](https://www.hearingloss.org/donate)