

The newsletter of the Hearing Loss Association of America, Albuquerque Chapter

WIRED FOR SOUND

Letter to HLAA Abq Members

This is Mary Clark, and I have served as your president over the past couple of years, as well as in years past. I have a deeper love for this chapter and its mission than you might believe. It is with sadness that I have submitted my resignation from the Board of Directors as of June 1st.

I want to tell you why I feel unable to continue in this role. My husband Gary had a stroke on March 13, and after spending time in the hospital, followed by another 24 days (Medicare-imposed limit) at Lovelace In-patient Rehab Hospital, he was discharged to a skilled nursing facility on the Friday afternoon before Easter. On Monday we got a call from the facility that they had 9 positive cases of COVID at their facility. Tuesday, Gary called and told us he wanted to come home instead of staying there, so we made it happen. So his “additional three weeks minimum” of therapy was cut short, and he came home on April 17th.

He needs help with many things, and although we are blessed that our daughter had moved back to stay with us for a spell while she worked on her



plans to move to work in Colorado, she was caught up in the COVID epidemic, and is also providing caregiving help for Gary.

Gary is improving, and we are encouraged, but he still has a long way to go. So my focus will be on him for the foreseeable future.

I encourage you all to consider ways that you might help out with the chapter. Watch for future newsletters with ideas of how you can help promote the mission of HLAA: education, information, advocacy and support. The chapter has suffered the same fate as many nonprofit self-help organizations, with closure due to the virus pandemic.

Warmly,
Mary Clark

Letter from the new President

Greetings to all HLAA-ABQ members!

There is nothing as constant as change. We are all facing big changes in this year of 2020.

To begin with, as you can see from the letter from our hard-working, dedicated past president, Mary Clark, she has had to resign due to her husband's health.

She has worked tirelessly to keep our chapter active and vibrant with many ideas and programs. We will miss her enthusiasm and energy.

Tough shoes to fill and the board asked me to step in as interim president. I accepted and will try to fill some of Mary's shoes.

We have already brought in a new VP of programs, Victoria Rivera. She is excited and has many ideas. She will work with Carol Clifford to develop new programs.

As some of you know, I was president of this chapter for 4 years or so and have been a long time member of HLAA and SHHH for over 20+ years. I look forward to see how we are going to adapt to

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people with hearing loss

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Meetings Resume in Fall

We are planning to resume meetings this fall, hopefully in September. Of course, that assumes that restrictions on public meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic have eased by then.

Please stay tuned to the website or Facebook for updates as we all join together in protecting ourselves by staying away from crowds. Please understand we have made everyone's health a priority, so we'll consider safety first in our decisions as we return to a program schedule. Individuals at higher risk because of age or other health conditions should be cautious, of course. We plan to offer an on-line alternative to in-person attendance, probably using Zoom with captions.

We will likely re-schedule the original April topic for September, or whenever we are able to resume regular meetings.

This extra summer issue begins with a letter from Mary Clark explaining why she has resigned as chapter president, and a letter from Norm Dawson introducing himself as the interim new president. We are sad to loose Mary, who's been a rock, but glad that Norm accepted to steer the ship for at least six months (maybe more), to get us through this transition.

We will also miss Howard Hirsch, who served admirably as Publicity Chair. Like many members, he felt uncomfortable coming to public meetings, and felt he could not serve well if he could not participate. We will miss his enthusiasm and resourcefulness.

On the other hand, we are pleased to welcome a new member to the board. Victoria Rivera is studying audiology at UNM. Victoria has accepted to step in as Vice President for Programs.

Topics being considered include:

- Learn about speech to text apps—the program that was planned for March
- Hearing loss in the hospital and other healthcare scenarios
- Hearing loss and the movies—where are we in 2020?

The HLAA ABQ Chapter has openings for several roles. You can man a special project. You can help us out for a few months, or consider a longer-term commitment. "Try us out" for a month or two. We will provide orientation for working on a nonprofit board, share our chapter's mission and goals, and discuss topics we can use your help with. If interested, contact any board member (contact info at left), or use the chapter email hlaabq@gmail.com.

new ways to keep this chapter active. For example, are we going to be a virtual chapter doing meetings online or meet in public or a hybrid of both? The board has not yet determined the direction. With the Coronavirus spreading and changing we are not certain ourselves the direction or format of this organization. We hope to continue to pro-

vide advocacy and support and will keep you informed. If you have any ideas or suggestions please let us know.

Have a safe and relaxed summer.

Dr. Norm Dawson

Interim President - HLAA-ABQ chapter



A tricky combination: Face masks, hearing loss and hearing aids¹

Joy Victory, managing editor, Healthy Hearing

Face masks are now required in many public places to help prevent the spread of coronavirus. For people with hearing loss, though, this may be easier said than done.

That's because face masks add extra challenges for people with hearing impairments:

- It's harder to understand people when they're speaking to you with a mask on their face.
- If you wear hearing aids, the ear loops may tug on your hearing aids and cause other problems.

Wearing a Mask With Hearing Aids

If you wear behind-the-ear [hearing aids](#), you will likely encounter some problems trying to wear a standard face mask with elastic ear loops. The ear loops may tug at the tubing that connects the hear-

ing aid to the speaker that sits in your ear (known as the [dome](#)). You also may inadvertently pull your hearing aids out and drop them when removing your mask. What's a hearing aid wearer to do?

Because there are so many [types of hearing aids](#), we recommend you first reach out to your hearing care provider who may have solutions they've come up with when talking to other patients. Also, we've seen [lots of creative workarounds](#) floating around out there, including:

- Wearing a mask with soft fabric ties to relieve the pressure on the ears, instead of elastic.
- Using a special mask extender with buttons or other holders to attach the mask loops onto, on the back of the head, instead of the ears. (Many medical practitioners now use these, since they have to wear tight-fitting masks all day.)
- Using simple tools like plastic s-hooks to loop the mask onto, instead of your ears.

"There have been calls for the public to use transparent face shields, rather than masks, which may offer a solution. But the public has yet to adopt this solution," [said](#) Kevin Munro, PhD, professor of audiology at the University of Manchester in the U.K.

Amazon Smile You can donate to the Albuquerque Chapter of the Hearing Loss Association of America every time you make a purchase of most of the products from Amazon.

Go to <http://www.hlaabq.com/amazonsmile.html> for more information and detailed instructions on how to designate HLAA-ABQ Chapter as your charity of choice when you make [amazon.com](#) purchases.

Once you have set it up, always log into smile.amazon.com to purchase from amazon. 0.5% of the purchase price is automatically donated to HLAA Albuquerque Chapter—at no cost to you.

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Call 1-866-4141 to sign up or re-enroll. The HLAAbq NPO number for Smith's is 14881.

¹ <https://www.healthyhearing.com/report/53084-Face-masks-and-hearing-aids>

Speaking to People With Hearing Loss When Wearing a Mask

In medical settings

People with hearing loss also face challenges when trying to listen to someone who is wearing a mask. In medical settings, where stress is running high and provider-to-patient communication is tantamount, this can lead to frustrating scenarios on both sides.

"Masks pose two obvious problems for patients with hearing loss: the patient cannot gain any cues from lipreading, and the voice of the healthcare provider is attenuated and distorted," note the authors of the study "[How do medical masks degrade speech reception?](#)", published in *The Hearing Review*. (In this context, "attenuated" means a mask lowers the volume of a person's voice.)

When combined with the clamor in many hospitals—and the lack of visual cues because the wearer's mask is blocked,—speech could be "close to unintelligible" for many hospitalized people with hearing loss, the study noted.

To help, the authors provided this checklist for talking to patients with hearing loss in medical settings:

- Reduce the room's noise and get the patient's attention
- Ask how the patient prefers to communicate
- Speak slowly and clearly
- Do not shout (this can be painful to a person with hearing loss)
- Make sure hearing aid wearers are using them
- Consider using a portable hearing aid amplifier
- Rephrase remarks if not understood
- Take turns while speaking to the patient

- Do not talk while walking
- If obtainable, masks with clear plastic make lip reading easier

"Speakers often naturally try to compensate by projecting, but a more effective approach is to speak more clearly, with greater enunciation," [explains](#) Nicole Marrone, PhD, associate professor in Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences at the University of Arizona.

In public settings

When out in public, such as at a shopping trip, these tips can't always be followed. But, for example, if you and your spouse are both wearing masks, make sure your spouse is aware they must speak more slowly and clearly to you. And speak up for yourself when talking to strangers, letting them know you can't hear well and need them to speak more clearly.

If you're the one trying to speak to someone with hearing loss, "use some creativity to get your meaning conveyed, instead of repeating the same misunderstood phrases over and over again," recommends Dr. Mandy Mroz, AuD, president of Healthy Hearing. "Don't underestimate the power of body language, eye contact and slowing down speech to be more clear."

More COVID-19 Resources for People With Hearing Loss

- [Is it safe to see an audiologist or hearing care provider during the pandemic? A checklist²](#)
- [Working remotely with hearing loss: Tips for virtual meetings³](#)
- [Managing tinnitus in times of great stress⁴](#)
- [Need an audiologist but can't travel? Telehealth may be an option⁵](#)

² <https://www.healthyhearing.com/report/53084-Face-masks-and-hearing-aids>

³ <https://www.healthyhearing.com/report/53083-Working-remotely-with-hearing-loss-tips-for-virtual-meetings>

⁴ <https://www.healthyhearing.com/report/53078-Tips-for-managing-tinnitus-during-coronavirus-stress>

⁵ <https://www.healthyhearing.com/report/52986-Need-an-audiologist-but-can-t-travel-telehealth-may-be-an-option>

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Meetings suspended

HLAA Albuquerque Chapter Meetings are held at Los Alos Christian Church,

11900 Hines Ave NE, on the 2nd Saturday of the month, Sep-Jun.

Socializing starts at 9:00 am, presentation at 10:00 am.

The public is cordially invited to attend.