

January 9 Chapter Meeting

What's New in Hearing Aids

by Audiologist
Dr. David DeKriek



New legislation about hearing aids and an increasing aging population are spurring more competition to add or improve features, interactivity, sound quality and price.

Hearing aids are advancing rapidly, and lots can change in just a year. Come hear about the latest developments in hearing aid technology.

Dr. DeKriek earned his Doctor of Audiology at the University of Florida and has been awarded Board Certification in Audiology. He is also a fellow of the American Academy of Audiology. His private practice, Fidelity Hearing, is located in Cerritos.

For many years he has generously served as the professional advisor to the Long Beach/Lakewood chapter of the HLAA.



Clear-window surgical masks are a life saver for patients with hearing loss

David Copithorne, HearingTracker.com, Nov. 19, 2019

Everything was going smoothly when Dr. Anne McIntosh went into labor with her first baby. Overcoming the obstacles of her deafness, McIntosh leveraged her ability to lipread to communicate with her doctor, her husband, and the nurses that attended her labor. But more than 25 hours later, she was still in labor. And when her doctor determined a C-section was needed, she confronted a problem that many people with hearing loss experience in hospitals everyday.

Sudden isolation

When McIntosh was moved into the operating room, all there—the anesthesiologist, the delivery doctor, the nurses, and her husband—were required to wear full surgical garb. And

all wore traditional mouth-concealing surgical masks. No longer able to read lips, McIntosh was completely cut off from the team providing her care.



Overwhelmed with anxiety

McIntosh was overwhelmed with anxiety. Would she

UPCOMING CHAPTER EVENTS

Unless otherwise noted, all events are at the Weingart Center, 5220 Oliva Ave, Lakewood 90712. (See map on last page.)

Jan 9 Chapter meeting
Thursday, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.
Dr. David DeKriek, Au.D.
What's new in hearing aids?

Jan 11 HAT Demonstration
Saturday, 10:30 a.m. to noon

Jan 22 Board meeting
Wednesday, noon to 2:00 p.m.
Open to any chapter member

Lip Reading classes (ongoing)
Wednesdays 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. with Linda

Chapter meetings are held on the 2nd Thursday of each month from September through May, and are always free and open to the public. Meetings are telecoil looped, with live projected captions, and free use of assistive listening devices so everyone can hear. Refreshments and a drawing are included. Come join us!

Our meeting room Telecoil loop was installed with the generous help of Rick Archbold of [Hearing Now USA](#).

American Girl's 2020 'Girl of the Year' is Joss! She's a surfer and rocks a hearing aid

Amy Haneline, USA TODAY, Dec. 31, 2019

American Girl is starting off the new year with a message of ambition and inclusivity—and a nod to the upcoming summer Olympics.



The Mattel-owned company has announced its annual “Girl of the Year,” and 2020’s doll is Joss Kendrick, a 10-year-old surfer and competitive cheerleader from Huntington Beach, California. She has two older brothers and a

pet bulldog. She has long brown hair and brown eyes and wears a swimsuit, hoodie and shorts. She also rocks a hearing aid.

Joss is the American Girl’s first-ever doll who has a disability.

“She has congenital hearing loss. She was born deaf in her left ear and can hear a little bit in her right ear,” American Girl president Jamie Cygielman told USA TODAY.

American Girl has long offered dolls that can be fitted with hearing aids and dolls with crutches and wheelchairs, but Joss is the first character whose disability is part of her story, Cygielman said.

Like many “Girl of the Year” dolls, Joss’ story also is timely: Surfing is making its debut as an Olympic sport in July. Thus, American Girl has teamed up with real-life surfer Caroline Marks to launch Joss. Marks, 17, will compete on the inaugural U.S. Women’s Olympic surfing team.

Marks told USA TODAY that she and Joss share a common message.

“This is a chance for to me to help show girls that it’s possible to achieve your goals no

matter how high they may be, you know, if you are passionate and willing to work hard for them.”

And Joss’ hearing loss doesn’t define her or limit or dreams, Cygielman said. The company worked alongside the hearing loss community to ensure Joss’ story was authentic. It specifically partnered with the Hearing Loss Association of America, an organization that represents, supports and advocates for consumers with hearing loss.

HAAA’s executive director Barbara Kelley believes the doll will help children with hearing loss feel more confident.

“If you have a child with any type of disability or any type of difference or wearing a hearing aid, to have a doll that mirrors that image I think goes a long way to help with the stigma and the stereotypes,” Kelley told USA TODAY.

Consumers are skeptical as to whether they would actually purchase these types of products, according to a survey of more than 700 consumers from Horizon Media.

But Cygielman said that this trend is nothing new for American Girl who has a 33-year history of offering dolls with varying skin tones and hair and eye colors.

“We have always been about diversity and inclusion and will continue to do that as part of the fabric of the brand,” she said.

The 18-inch Joss doll is \$98 and is available for purchase at [americangirl.com](https://www.americangirl.com) and at American Girl retail stores.

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/life/parenting/2019/12/31/american-girl-doll-of-the-year-2020-joss-surfer-cheerleader-hearing-aid/2708063001/>



Caroline Marks, who has qualified for the 2020 Olympics in surfing, poses with the American Girl of the Year Joss.

clear-window surgical masks

(continued from page 1)

be able to understand important medical questions and directions quickly enough to avoid problems? Tired and alarmed, she feared that poor communication might lead to harm for her or the baby. Luckily, her husband was there to communicate. The C-section went without incident, and she delivered a healthy baby girl.

But McIntosh never forgot the terrible feeling of helplessness she experienced in that potentially life-or-death moment. “In a matter of minutes, I went from being a doctor with a PhD who could communicate and articulate well, to a numbed, tired, fatigued patient who was counting on mercies and miracles,” she says. She realized that all of that stress and anxiety could have been avoided if she had simply been able to read the lips of the medical providers who were there to help her deliver their daughter. She knew there had to be a better way.

Where there’s a will, there’s a way

“I decided then and there that if there wasn’t a solution available, I would create one,” she says. McIntosh did some research and discovered there were no FDA-approved surgical masks on the market that provided a clear window enabling patients to see care providers’ lips when they were speaking. So, she decided to develop a product for them.

It took several years, but the product she created in partnership with Prestige-America, The Communicator™ Clear Window Surgical Mask from Safe ‘n Clear, finally won FDA approval and hit the market at the end of 2017. The mask, with a simple clear plastic window that’s specially treated to reduce fogging, completely eliminates lipreading problems while providing FDA-approved ASTM Level 1 protection.

McIntosh felt The Communicator’s time had come. Patients and caregivers have become increasingly concerned about airborne pathogens. And use of surgical masks has become common, not just in the operating room, but for routine appointments in medical settings as well. McIntosh assumed that The Communicator mask was a clear case of “if you build it, they will come.” She launched the product and

waited for the world to beat a path to her door.

Embracing change for better communication

“But that’s when the real work started,” she says. It turns out hospitals and the medical establishment are set in their ways and slow to embrace change. “Even when there are simple and seemingly obvious solutions to common problems, they just keep doing things the way they’ve always done them.”

McIntosh went door to door, demonstrating her mask in dozens of hospitals and medical practices. And when she got their attention, she found a receptive audience.

Alicia Booth of Designated Interpreters works in hospitals providing American Sign Language interpretation to help doctors and patients communicate more effectively. She says many caregivers have long wondered why such a mask wasn’t readily available.

“For many years we have been waiting for the approval of a clear mask to use in all hospitals,” she says. Once she and her colleagues tried the Safe’N’Clear mask, there was no turning back. “We really love it. It is a clear mask that does not fog, has FDA approval and can be used with patients or in the operating room.”

More value from a Made-in-America mask

As CEO of her new business, McIntosh also encountered unexpected manufacturing and distribution hurdles. Many masks purchased by hospitals are produced in China, where the cost of labor is very low. Undeterred, McIntosh was committed to keeping her mask Made-in-America, as she felt quality controls would be more strictly enforced. But that increased her manufacturing and end-product costs.

McIntosh encountered another hurdle when she discovered that many medical equipment suppliers bundle bulk quantities of surgical masks as a free sales incentive for hospitals that buy their products. This has led many medical professionals to view surgical masks as commodities that should be inexpensive.

(continued on page 4)

clear-window surgical masks

(continued from page 3)

Overcoming the hurdles, Safe’N’Clear has ramped up sales, and McIntosh says her company has brought down costs for large-volume purchases to as low as 67 cents per mask. That’s still more than what you pay for the traditional mass-produced masks. But McIntosh says she is having success in communicating the additional value that a mask with a clear window provides.

Poor communication leads to expensive medical liabilities

McIntosh, who holds a PhD in communications science and disorders from the University of Texas, cites statistics from a 2015 Crico Strategies survey that determined 30% of malpractice claims over a five-year period occurred as a result of communication breakdowns. An article she co-authored with Bill Holahan, JD, “The Math Works: Reduce Communication-Related Medical Errors by Investing Upfront,” references a significant finding: of the 23,000 malpractice cases studied in the Crico Strategies survey, more than 7,000 “could have been prevented with clearer, more visible communication.” Those failures were linked to more than 1,700 deaths and to \$1.7 billion in medical malpractice costs incurred by medical providers.

“Even when you take deafness out of the equation, conventional masks can create problems. They muffle speech and make it more difficult to understand your provider even when you can hear well,” she says. “For example, how often does your dentist pull down the mask to talk to you? It isn’t just to show off that million-dollar smile.”

Another important factor for hospitals and medical practices is compliance. She says The Communicator masks provide an auxiliary aid to help hospitals meet the “Effective Communication” requirement of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the “Primary Consideration” provision of the Affordable Care Act of 2010. Both require caregivers to take steps, including provision of translators and sign-language interpreters, to ensure safe and

effective communication with patients.

“In some instances, what’s more expensive? A surgical mask with a clear window, or an ASL interpreter?” she asks. Interpreters love the mask because they are equipped with mask protection; however, not all deaf people know sign language. Sometimes you need both—the interpreter and the mask. “It’s not just a matter of convenience—better communication is a dollars-and-sense issue that will provide better and more efficient care, avoid liabilities, reduce the costs of compliance, and return dollars to the bottom line.”

Healthy competition means the product is catching on

In the two years since the world’s first FDA-approved medical mask with a clear window hit the market, The Communicator has started to catch on and sales are increasing. And—no surprise—it has started to attract competition. One startup, ClearMask, LLC, was founded by a team with ties to the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, and has raised money and developed their own product. They are going through the FDA approval process now.

McIntosh isn’t concerned. She seeks collaboration, partnerships, alliances, education, and advocacy among companies and products with the goal being to break down barriers to communication, and to provide inclusion and accessibility for everyone.

“My goal is to see that the problem is solved. The more solutions that are available, the fewer patients there will be who have to experience the kind of helplessness and anxiety I did,” she says. “And if every hospital in the country decides to start using Communicator masks as a first option, there will be plenty of demand for products from us and others.”

https://www.hearingtracker.com/news/clear-window-surgical-masks-are-a-lifesaver-for-patients-with-hearing-loss?utm_source=Hearing+Tracker+Updates&utm_campaign=d0df85b90d-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_09_03_09_55_COPY_02&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_790a5b8263-d0df85b90d-455418477

CHAPTER NEWS

Refreshments

Thanks to Gail Morrison and Miryam Fernandez, who volunteered to bring treats for our January Chapter meeting.

Please pitch in to supply refreshments! Sign up with Adela Praderas or Joyce Bowlby to bring a finger food treat to a future chapter meeting.

New member roster available

Membership Chair Ellen Mathis has updated and expanded our membership roster. Besides paid chapter members, it now includes everyone who is active or connected with our chapter.

The new list will be available in time for our January 9 chapter meeting. For privacy reasons, it will not be handed out, but if you're on the list and would like a print or emailed copy, you can request one from Ellen.

It's time to pay Chapter dues!

Only \$1 for the whole year!
Please pay (cash only) to Treasurer Craig Bowlby.



Please consider joining HLAA National

Only \$45 per year (or \$55 per family) includes two online magazine subscriptions. AND a portion of each membership comes back to our chapter. See Membership Chair Ellen Mathis if you'd like to join and support this important non-profit organization.

Free and fun!
Join anytime

Lip Reading Class

Wednesdays
9:30 - 11:30 a.m.
with Linda

Hearing Assistive
Technology

HAT Demonstration

Saturday
Jan. 11, 2020
10:30 a.m.– Noon

both at the Weingart Senior Center in Lakewood

Get the Informer by US Mail - \$10/year

Make check out to Long Beach/Lakewood HLAA and mail to HLAA Long Beach/Lakewood, 5200 Clark Ave, P.O. Box 41, Lakewood CA 90714

HLAA, Long Beach/Lakewood Chapter

Officers

President Gail Morrison
Vice-President Ram Kakkar
Treasurer Craig Bowlby
Recording Secretary Miryam Hernandez
Corresponding Secretary Van VonBurg

Committees

Hearing Assistive Technology Katie Wright
Lip Reading Linda DeGuire
Looping Ram Kakkar
Membership Ellen Mathis
Programs/Publicity Gail Morrison
Refreshments Adela Praderas, Joyce Bowlby
Ways and Means *need volunteer!*

Professional Advisor

Dr. David DeKriek, Au.D.

Newsletter

Editor Katie Wright
Layout Ilga Dravnieks

For more information about our chapter:

hlaa-lb-lakewood.org
email: info@hlaa-lb-lakewood.org

Katie Wright (323) 205-6794
katie.hearingloss@gmail.com

HLAA Hearing Loss Association of America

Join HLAA to receive *Hearing Loss Magazine* and to become part of the one organization that represents the interests of 48 million people with hearing loss in the U.S.

Send \$45 for individual or \$55 for family membership to:
Hearing Loss Association of America
7910 Woodman Avenue, Suite 1200
Bethesda, MD 20814

Or join online: <https://www.hearingloss.org/make-an-impact/become-a-memberrenew/>

For more information:

(301) 657-2248 or email inquiry@hearingloss.org.

Membership brochures are available at chapter meetings.

CTAP California Telephone Access Program

For information, repair or exchange:
English Voice 1-800-806-1191
Spanish Voice 1-800-949-5650
www.californiaphones.org/about-us

DISCLAIMER: We believe the information contained in this publication has been compiled from reliable sources. However none of the contributors, sponsors, or anyone else connected with the Informer in any way whatsoever can be responsible for the appearance of any inaccurate or libelous information or for your use of the information contained in or linked from these pages. If you need specific advice, for example, for your particular hearing concerns, please seek a professional who is licensed or knowledgeable in that area. We further do not recommend or endorse any product or professional but supply such information as a public service.

Long Beach/Lakewood HLAA
5200 Clark Ave, P. O. Box 41
Lakewood CA 90714

Upcoming Programs

Jan 9 Dr. David DeKriek, Au.D.: *What's new in hearing aids*

Feb 13 speaker and topic to be finalized

Mar 12 speaker and topic to be finalized

Monthly chapter meetings:

2nd Thursday of each month

6:30-8:00 p.m.

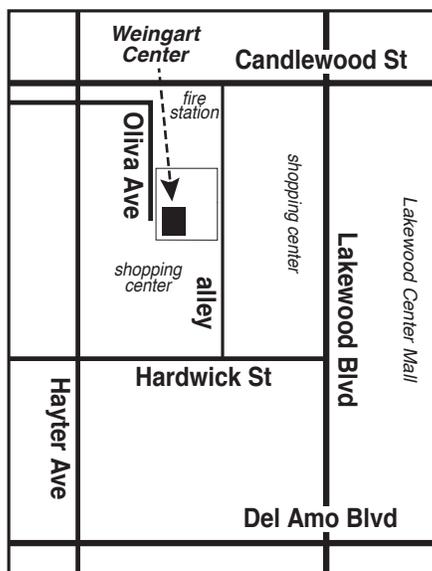
September through May

All Chapter meetings, Board meetings, lip reading classes, and HAT demonstrations are held at:

Weingart Center

5220 Oliva Ave.

Lakewood, CA 90712



If you don't like meetings because you can't hear well, our meetings are different!

- We have a high quality sound system
- We'll lend you an assistive listening device
- If you have hearing aids with telecoils, we have a hearing induction loop.
- We project captions on the wall for you to read.

We provide all these options free so you can understand what is said.



Hearing Loss Association of America

HLAA opens the world of communication to people with hearing loss through information, education, support and advocacy.

Join HLAA now at

<https://www.hearingloss.org/make-an-impact/become-a-memberrenew/> to receive *Hearing Life Magazine* and become part of a nationwide nonprofit organization representing the interests of 48 million people living with hearing loss in the United States.