

### September Chapter Meeting

**Guest speaker:**  
**Audiologist**  
**Dr. David**  
**DeKriek**



Curious about new products offered by the hearing aid companies? Dr. DeKriek, our Professional Advisor, will be at our September chapter meeting to tell us all about them. He also has some updates about current state and federal legislation. Join us!

**Thursday September 9 at 6:30 pm  
on Zoom**

[Register in advance for this meeting](#)

### Chapter Calendar

**September 22 at Noon**

Board meeting on Zoom

**October 14 at 6:30**

Monthly Chapter Meeting on Zoom, speaker to be determined

**Lip reading:** classes resume September 8 on Zoom

### Board meeting news

The board made the decision to not resume in-person meetings as long as the indoor mask mandate remains in place. This includes Chapter meetings, Lip Reading classes, and Board meetings, which will all continue on Zoom until further notice.

## Feel caught between Deaf and Hearing worlds?

*Gael Hannan, August 17, 2021*

I am deaf but not Deaf. I can hear but I'm not Hearing (term for someone who does not have hearing loss, which I have not capitalized for this article).

So, what am I?

Last night, we watched CODA (child of Deaf adults), the new movie about a family that has both Deaf and hearing family members. Mom, Dad, and the grown son are Deaf, and the teenage daughter is Hearing—as well as her family's interpreter for their communication with other people in their town and fishing business.



The film was charming and moving. I cried a bit and so did the Hearing Husband because we both saw bits of ourselves in the movie. He, as the spouse of a woman with profound hearing loss, saw the challenges that he lives with daily. I teared up at some brilliantly acted moments that were spot-on and painfully familiar. A lifetime of making a lot of noise and not realizing it because I couldn't hear it. The isolation when everyone around me understands what's going on or being said. The having to stare intently at someone's face to make out what they were saying.

I am not Deaf like the characters in CODA. Without my assistive technology I am functionally deaf, but with it, I can hear, although I miss a lot and I still need to speechread. I must also

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## August chapter meeting recap

Why shouldn't you write with a broken pencil?

Because it's pointless!

This is just one example of the silly jokes Katie told us to get our August Chapter meeting going. We then had a chance to catch up with each other by answering these questions:

- What have you been doing to keep busy lately?
- If you could live your life over, what would you change?
- What is something that made you smile lately (besides Katie's jokes)?

It was so good to see familiar faces! By the way, what do Alexander the Great and Winnie the Pooh have in common? ..... their middle names! (Did you laugh or groan?)

### Member profile: Miryam Fernandez

#### What brought you to HLAA?

The American Disabilities Act brought me to HLAA. I had been teaching elementary school for over 25 years and my principal informed me that I was eligible for accommodations for my hearing loss through the ADA. Although I was still fairly functional, it was difficult to understand the small little voices of my Kindergarten through 3rd grade students. At this point I contacted my local HLAA chapter and Bill Busch and Katie Wright responded. They were very welcoming and helpful. I believe it was in early 2016. I've been a member since.

#### What is your involvement with the chapter?

I am currently the Recording Secretary for this chapter and have been hosting our Board meetings via Zoom. I've taught a couple classes on how to use Zoom to my chapter. I am happy to use my intermediate knowledge of technology to help my fellow members.

#### How does HLAA help you?

I have learned many things about hearing loss and ways to live with it. Being a member keeps me in the loop as new developments arise. As a US Air Force veteran, I lost most of my hearing in my left ear during my military service as I trained to be a Security Police Officer. I enjoy being someplace where others can relate to hearing loss knowing that I'll be understood.

## Macomb County native invents device at Harvard that could revolutionize eardrum repair

Janelle James, *Detroit Free Press*  
June 27, 2021

It's the bane of rock stars, concertgoers, soldiers on the front lines and folks who insist on using cotton swabs: a ruptured eardrum.

Painful and time-consuming, eardrum repairs often require surgery under general anesthesia leading to costly medical bills. What's more, the outcome often is less than ideal.

Now a Macomb County native is seeking approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for a game-changing invention—a device that allows the eardrum to heal itself.



Nicole Black, 28, of Utica, has created a biodegradable device that allows eardrum perforations to heal themselves.

The device, called Phonograft, can be used in patients who suffer ear trauma from exploding bombs like IEDs, chronic infections or from foreign objects like cotton swabs.

The device was designed to mimic the human body's eardrum. Once the device is placed, the ear will begin to generate new cells while the Phonograft slowly degrades, leaving the ear with nothing but new cells.

"The 3D printable nature of Phonograft and the ability to either cut or customize it at the time of surgery means that it can be used for any perforation size and location," Black said.

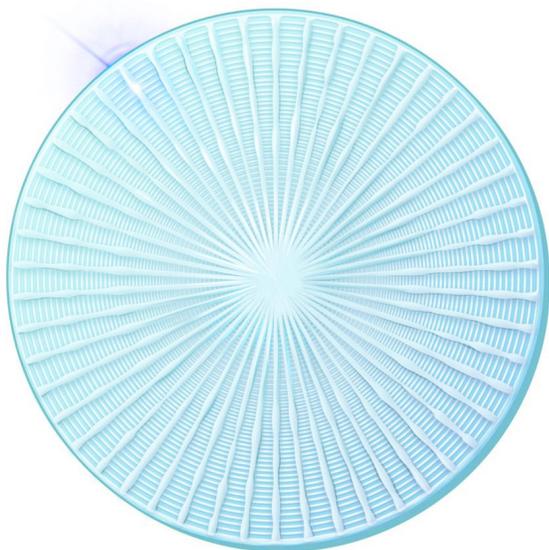
The Harvard graduate has been developing the Phonograft for six years now. She got the idea after visiting Dr. Aaron Remenschneider at Massachusetts Eye and Ear hospital in Boston. Remenschneider worked with a lot of patients who suffered ear-related injuries from the Boston Marathon bombing.

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## eardrum repair

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3-D image of the Phonograft device used to help repair eardrum perforations.

“Dr. Remenschneider followed the outcome of a lot of these patients after they had their eardrums repaired with traditional materials ... and over time he saw that their outcomes were not ideal,” Black said.

Typically, when someone requires an eardrum repair, tissue taken from their own body, known as fascia, is used to fix the eardrum.

Black also worked under professor Jennifer Lewis at Harvard University, who did a lot of research into material science and 3D printing.

The process began once Black started gathering biodegradable materials that were compatible with the human ear. One of the unique features of Phonograft is that the molecules formed after it degrades are molecules that are already found in the human body. The Phonograft is nontoxic and will not cause infection in other parts of the ear.

Black is finalizing the material for Phonograft so that it is able to be transported in different

settings, particularly to the military, where ear perforations are common in soldiers.

She is also working on designs so that the placement of the Phonograft through the ear canal can be done while patients are awake. Currently, patients are required to undergo general anesthesia for this type of procedure.

The overall goal for Phonograft is to make the procedure as quick, cost-effective and efficient as possible.

“How we are trying to revolutionize this procedure is make it a 20-minute, in-and-out clinic procedure. Rather than you having to book a full day in advance and show up with a loved one to accompany you with anesthesia, ideally, you could just show up at a clinic, the ENT surgeon could take Phonograft and place it through your ear canal just with local anesthesia and you could be in and out of there within 20, 30 minutes,” Black said.

Black predicts that the Phonograft could allow doctors to do dozens of eardrum repairs throughout the day or occupy themselves with other work. Hospitals could potentially save money because this procedure would require only local anesthesia as opposed to general anesthesia.

Black is pursuing a 510K FDA clearance and hopes that the device will be marketable to ear, nose and throat surgeons by the end of next year or early 2023.

<https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/macomb/2021/06/27/utica-native-invents-revolutionary-eardrum-repair-device/7735353002/>

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**For more information about our chapter, visit [hlaa-lb-lakewood.org](http://hlaa-lb-lakewood.org)**

**Questions?** Contact us by email at [info@hlaa-lb-lakewood.org](mailto:info@hlaa-lb-lakewood.org) or phone Katie Wright (323) 205-6794

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## caught between Deaf and Hearing

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advocate for myself with other people—please speak up, face me, slow down, turn down the background noise, etc.

Many people with hearing loss feel caught between the Deaf and Hearing worlds. But I have never seen it that way; to me, the idea of Deaf and Hearing as being separate worlds doesn't make sense to me. Deaf Culture is a way of life which has its own values, traditions, social norms and identity—and its own language, the language of sign although there is no universal sign language. The 'hearing world' is one where presumably people have the sense of hearing—the perception and understanding of sound. But here's the thing: whether it's Spanish, English, German, or Tagalog, you don't need the ability to hear, or hear well, to speak, write and use a 'spoken' language.

Sign language is part of Deaf Culture, but Hearing people don't have a culture built around their common ability to hear. They don't bond over it. In fact, they generally don't even think about it—they hear organically, without effort. It's what they do.

I don't feel caught between being Deaf and Hearing just as I, because I use corrective lenses, don't feel caught between the worlds of being Blind or Sighted. I have profound hearing loss, but English is my language—I just can't always hear or understand it. I have to work at it.

When people say they feel caught in the middle, they may be saying that communication is difficult, frustrating, and very imperfect. They can't communicate with ease, in the way that Deaf people can sign fluently with each other and Hearing people can talk and hear easily with each other. Hearing loss changes lives and navigating that change is challenging—because most people, (yes, the Hearing ones), don't yet understand what we need. Especially if we don't tell them!

When we have hearing loss, we need help to communicate in the language we know. We must learn to use technology and non-technical strategies such as using visual cues. We must become comfortable, through practice, in expressing our communication needs and how to have them met.

Our world is one of overlapping languages and modes of communication. If we become separated because of hearing challenges, we must work with our communication partners to bridge the gaps.

So, who am I and where do I fit? What I know is this: I'm a person with hearing loss who uses versions of the spoken—and good communication means the world to me.

<https://hearinghealthmatters.org/betterhearingconsumer/2021/feel-caught-between-deaf-and-hearing-worlds/>

NOTE: You can see the movie "CODA" on Apple TV+.



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## First Class

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