



## Wake Chapter Newsletter Oct 2024

### Websites:

[Wake Chapter](#)

[Recent Wake Chapter Newsletters](#)

[HLAA-NC](#) [HLAA National](#)

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### In This Newsletter

[Hearing Assistance Dogs Focus of October Program](#)

[Thanks for Your Support of NC Walk4Hearing!](#)

[More Walk4Hearing Photos](#)

[Our Representative on State Council](#)

[BEGINNINGS Benefit Beckons](#)

[Tech Focus: Artificial Intelligence \(AI\) Impact on Hearing Devices](#)

[T-Mobile Accessibility Day](#)

[Wake Chapter Contacts](#)

## [Hearing Assistance Dogs Focus of October Program](#)

HLAA Wake Chapter members will have a special opportunity to learn about hearing assistance dogs at our October program meeting.

Join us Thursday, October 24, at Kirk of Kildaire Presbyterian Church, 200 High Meadow Dr. in Cary, for a presentation by [Dogs for Better Lives](#), a nonprofit that provides hearing, autism and facility assistance dogs.

The program will feature Dr. Danielle Rose, a member of the Dogs for Better Lives board who lives in Mooresville, NC, and her black Labrador assistance dog, Delight.

Due to technological limitations, the event will not be available remotely via Zoom. It will take place in the church's Fellowship Hall and begin at 7 p.m. Beverages and snacks will be available during and after the presentation. The hall is outfitted with a hearing loop, which will provide telecoil-equipped hearing aid or cochlear implant users with an enhanced listening experience.



[GO TO Page 1](#)

## [Thanks for Your Support of NC Walk4Hearing!](#)

Preliminary results are in for the 2024 Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) North Carolina Walk4Hearing, and the performance of the HLAA Wake Chapter Team was outstanding!

This year's event, held October 13 at WakeMed Soccer Park in Cary, involved 367 participants from 36 teams and raised \$32,717.

The HLAA Wake Chapter Team raised \$3,720, which proved to be more than any other team. Wendy Dembeck, our team captain, ranked third among all individual fundraisers. She was responsible for raising \$1,247.

Thanks to all the walkers, donors, sponsors and volunteers who contributed to the success of the event. Because of your efforts, people with hearing loss can receive the information, support and resources they need to live their best lives. The walk is the Wake Chapter's primary fundraising activity and sustains our continued operation, outreach activities and scholarships for worthy local high school graduates with hearing loss.

It's not too late to donate to the NC Walk4Hearing. Donations are being accepted [online](#) through December 13.



[See more Walk4Hearing Photos](#)

[GO TO Page 1](#)

[More Walk4Hearing Photos](#)



[GO TO Page 1](#)

## Our Representative on State Council

The North Carolina Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing advises the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Public Instruction on matters pertaining to services provided to deaf and hard of hearing individuals and their families.

The council includes 28 members, many of whom are appointed by the governor. They include people with a variety of backgrounds and interests in issues of significance to deaf and hard of hearing North Carolina citizens. Council members include an educator who trains deaf education teachers, an audiologist, and parents of deaf or hard of hearing children.

There also are members selected upon the recommendations of statewide organizations representing the deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing. The Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA)-North Carolina State Association is charged with recommending one hard of hearing person to the governor for appointment to the council. Steve Latus of the Wake Chapter currently serves as HLAA's representative on the council. His four-year term concludes on June 30, 2027.



STEVE LATUS AND HIS WIFE, RUTH STEVENS, PARTICIPATING IN THE 2023 NORTH CAROLINA WALK4HEARING.

“The council meets at least four times a year, and it’s overwhelming how many issues I’ve been introduced to in my brief tenure,” says Latus. “We’ve just finished an exercise in which we prioritized more than 40 issues that have been brought before the council in recent years.”

As the result of the prioritization exercise, the council has begun to focus on the five issues deemed both most important and urgent. Two of the top five issues relate to services for deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing children from birth to age five. A third issue involves the quality and reliability of VRI (video relay interpreter) services in hospitals. Also among the top priority issues: addressing a decline in teachers of the deaf training programs in the state, and ensuring all government meetings open to the public provide sign language interpreters and captioning services.

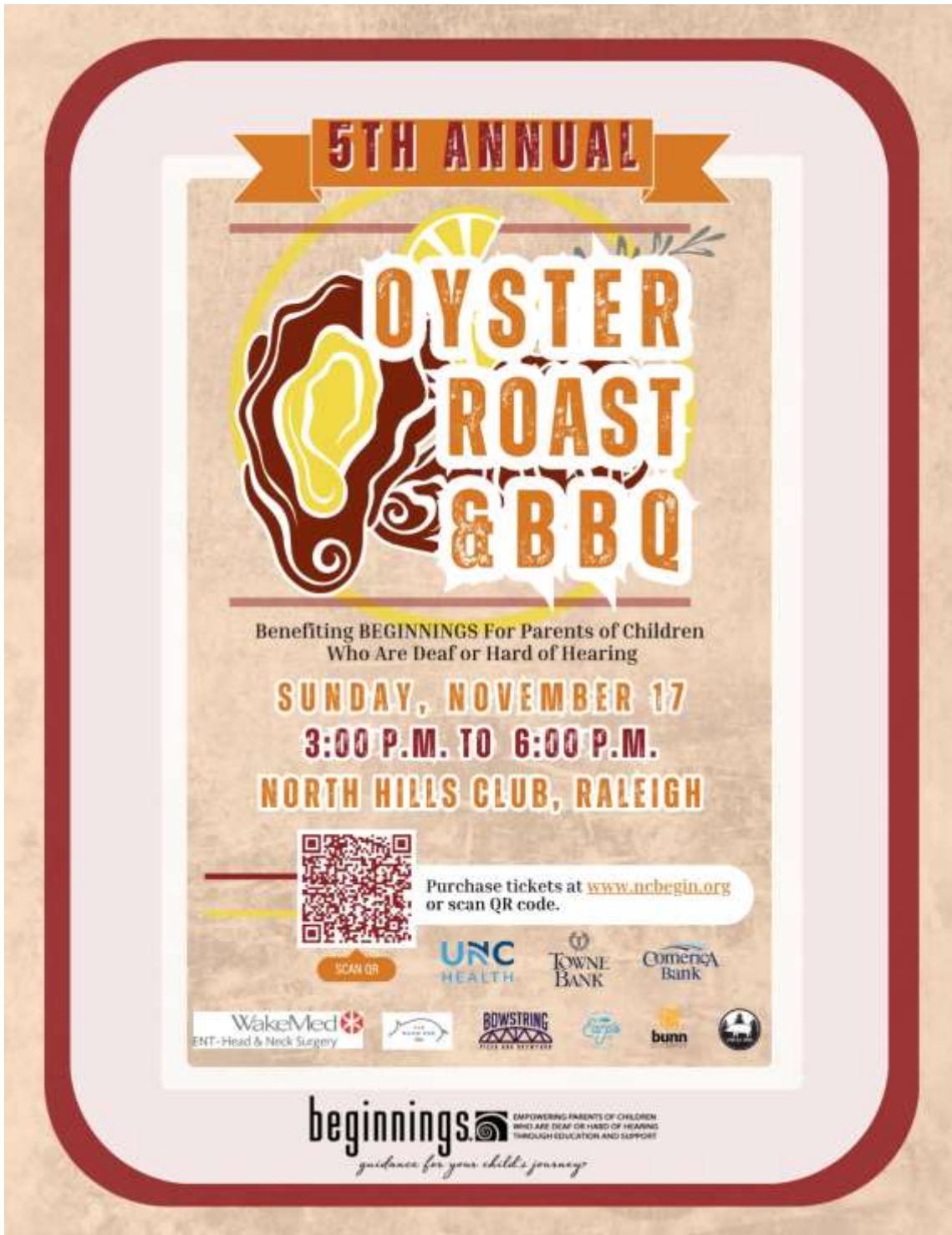
“I’m optimistic about our direction,” says Latus. “What the council is supposed to do is make tangible recommendations for the cost-effective provision, coordination and improvement of services for the deaf and hard of hearing. Doing that for even one of our top issues will represent a significant accomplishment and, hopefully, create momentum that leads to more progress.”

Latus welcomes input from others on issues related to state services for the hard of hearing. Contact him by email at [slatus@comcast.net](mailto:slatus@comcast.net).

[GO TO Page 1](#)

## BEGINNINGS Benefit Beckons

Scan the QR code below or visit [www.ncbegin.org](http://www.ncbegin.org) to purchase tickets for the Fifth Annual Oyster Roast & Barbecue benefitting BEGINNINGS For Parents of Children Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. This family-friendly event is Sunday, November 17, from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. at the North Hills Club in Raleigh.



**5TH ANNUAL**

**OYSTER ROAST & BBQ**

Benefiting BEGINNINGS For Parents of Children Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 17**  
**3:00 P.M. TO 6:00 P.M.**  
**NORTH HILLS CLUB, RALEIGH**

SCAN QR

Purchase tickets at [www.ncbegin.org](http://www.ncbegin.org) or scan QR code.

UNC HEALTH | TOWNE BANK | Comerica Bank

WakeMed ENT-Head & Neck Surgery | BOWSTRING | bunn

**beginnings.** EMPOWERING PARENTS OF CHILDREN WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING THROUGH EDUCATION AND SUPPORT  
*guidance for your child's journey*

[GO TO Page 1](#)

## **Tech Focus: Artificial Intelligence (AI) Impact on Hearing Devices**

In terms of hearing device technology, amazing progress has been achieved, starting in about 1990. Digital technology has triggered many advances, including automation, remote controls, directional microphones, multiple new settings, Bluetooth controls and continually improved streaming options. But now, the availability of very fast and tiny computer chips and software offer even more advances. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is now available in some recently developed hearing aids.

### **What is AI, and How Does it Work?**

AI is basically new software that can be taught and even learn for itself. It's software that requires very fast and powerful computers that can now be built into tiny chips that can run that software. The software can be taught before you buy the aid how to process sound to best change the way it processes the sound your hearing aid (or cochlear implant) hears in real time. It can also continue to learn based on what works for you.

### **How Does it Learn?**

AI software is first trained by giving it things to learn and a goal. A classic example explains how an AI software might be fed a lot of different pictures containing a cat or cats. Once the software starts recognizing cats correctly, then lots of pictures that might or might not contain cats are fed to it so the software learns how to reliably recognize cats.

When developing software for an AI chip in a hearing aid, the same approach is used, but instead of teaching with photos, the software is fed thousands or even millions of recorded audio clips of different sound environments so it can best change your hearing device's settings and make what you hear better than ever.

### **Benefits to future hearing aids and cochlear implants**

So, how can all that learning about sound environments help you hear better?

- **Machine Learning Algorithms:** AI uses machine learning to analyze and classify different types of sounds. By learning from vast amounts of data, these algorithms can distinguish between speech and background noise, enhancing the clarity of conversations.
- **Real-Time Sound Processing:** AI enables hearing aids to process sounds in real-time, making millions of adjustments per second. This ensures that users receive the best possible sound quality in various environments, whether it's a noisy restaurant or a quiet room.
- **Adaptive Noise Reduction:** AI can dynamically reduce background noise while preserving important sounds like speech. This makes it easier for users to focus on conversations without being distracted by ambient noise.
- **Personalized Sound Profiles:** AI learns the user's listening preferences and habits over time. It can create personalized sound profiles that automatically adjust based on the user's environment and activities.
- **Directional Microphones:** AI can control directional microphones to focus on the sound source the user is interested in, such as a person speaking in front of them, while minimizing sounds from other directions.
- **Health and Activity Monitoring:** Some AI-enabled hearing aids come with sensors that track physical activity and health metrics. This data can be used to provide insights into the user's overall well-being.
- **Natural Sound Processing:** AI helps in processing the user's own voice to sound more natural and less distorted, improving the overall listening experience.

At least two major hearing aid manufacturers (Widex and Phonak) have already introduced new hearing aid models with AI features. You can expect more hearing aids and cochlear implants will add similar features in the future. So, AI is one more thing you can consider when looking for your next upgrade.

[GO TO Page 1](#)

## T-Mobile Accessibility Day

You may be interested in this event scheduled by T-Mobile. Kim Calabretta, one of our members, provided the flyer at the right that has the details. It's not an HLAA event, but is a free event covering accessibility issues for Deaf and Hard of Hearing people.



**JOIN US**  
**FOR A SPECIAL EVENT**

**Accessibility Day**  
**November 17, 2024**  
**1-5 PM**

Join our Accessibility staff for great deals, giveaways, and more! Interpreters on-site!

T-Mobile Store- Brier Creek  
7880 Alexander Place, Ste 115  
Raleigh, NC 27617  
Assistive Listening Devices available!

**T Mobile**  
accessibilitystore@t-mobile.com

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[GO TO Page 1](#)