

WIRED FOR SOUND

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

Employment Success Stories

Excerpts from Hearing Loss blog¹

With hearing loss now affecting more than 50 million Americans, job-related issues are common for adults in the workforce. Communication challenges with colleagues often lead to frustration, listening fatigue and missing important information. Hearing loss may also influence the hiring process and in some cases, earning potential.

Despite the [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#) and other laws to protect people with hearing loss from discrimination, some employment disparities still exist.

- Only 57.1% of adults with hearing loss are employed, compared to 73.3% of hearing people. ([National Deaf Center](#))

- People with hearing loss earn about 25% less; their mean wage was \$23,481, compared with \$31,272 for typical-hearing peers. ([The Hearing Journal](#)).

Don't Let "Can't" Shape Your Future

Hearing loss doesn't just affect how we hear—it affects how the world hears us.

For Theodore "Theo" Shomsky, college graduation promised opportunities, yet his hearing loss quickly began closing doors. Careers in law enforcement, aviation and the military were off-limits, and phone interviews left him anxious. "Every misun-



Theo Shomsky



derstood word felt like a lost opportunity," he recalls.

Ibrahim Dabo faced yet another path: "I didn't realize hearing loss was at the root of so many of my struggles until I was diagnosed. For over a decade, I faced challenges—social isolation, stress and even burnout—without knowing the cause. Accepting the diagnosis was difficult, but it ultimately transformed how I see myself, my journey and my purpose."

But barriers don't need to be the end of our stories. We can each discover our own ways to transform obstacles into breakthroughs and shape our futures.

What's Your Breakthrough?

Turning points and methods vary from one person to the next, drawing on our unique strengths, intentions and resolve.

Tori Carapelho found that silence wasn't peaceful but isolating, and she wondered, "Is hearing loss a barrier to a purposeful life?" Determined to change that, she launched Hear 4 Hope, a space for education and encouragement that brought people together to share experiences and sup-

¹See the full article at <https://www.hearingloss.org/from-barriers-to-breakthroughs-empowering-employment-success-with-hearing-loss/>

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HEARING LOSS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA
ALBUQUERQUE CHAPTER
Providing support and advocacy for
people with hearing loss

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[Hearing Loss Association of America](http://hearinglossabq.org)
– Albuquerque chapter



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21 Feb Meeting 10:00 AM - Noon. **Map on Back Page****Our Rights Under Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)**

Accommodations for our hearing loss with medical providers, banks, government entities etc. shouldn't be so hard, should it? As Hard of Hearing patrons, our hearing loss is mostly invisible, which means that the advocacy falls to us.

Katie Gordon is with the Disability Rights New Mexico as Director of Communications and Outreach. She is both sympathetic to our needs and frustrated just the same. Her presentation will outline both what our rights are and how to ask for them in non-confrontational language. (E.g., "You need to provide me with better communications since I have a hearing loss" versus "I have a hearing loss, and I need you to face me, speak to me without the barrier, more slowly and clearly, or better yet, if you have an assistive listening device, I will need to use it to ensure accurate communications.") How many of us have misheard details at a doctor's appointment or the bank, or when we go to vote, or on the phone with the utility company?



Katie has tip sheets available, and she will share those during her program. Please join us on Saturday, Feb 21 at the Deaf Culture Center Events Room or on Zoom for what promises to be an enlightening program.

Milestone: In January 2026 we had our first in-person meeting at the Deaf Culture Center (DCC). Their charter includes serving both the deaf and the hard of hearing populations in this area. Their event room is on the ground floor of the PAH! Highland Plaza apartment building at 5000 Central Ave SE, Albuquerque, NM 87108. There is a map on back page. Parking is on Jackson Street or at an abandoned Auto Zone across the street.

We could use help in setup, handling the meeting and tear-down. We also want some new blood. You can ease your way into volunteering and learn how this works. Just email one of the board members (listed on the left). You may also use the chapter email: HLAAbq@gmail.com.

port one another. That effort grew into the HLAA Hawaii Group, where she now helps others find strength in community. Through education, advocacy and ongoing support, the group empowers people living with hearing loss and ensures their voices are heard.

Ibrahim's inner strength carried him from refugee to advocate, guided by faith, determination and hard work. Today, he serves on the Georgia Commission for the Deaf or Hard of Hearing and is a global humanitarian technology leader and past HLAA Board Member. His journey shows how even the deepest challenges can be transformed into new possibilities, inspiring others with hearing loss to embrace resilience and rise into their fullest potential.

Born with profound hearing loss, Michael Noble received a cochlear implant as a child. His adaptability shaped his career and ultimately his leadership in the accessibility field. He now uses his platform as Task Force chair to bridge industries and advance systemic change. Similarly, Theo drew on his persistence to transform barriers into innovation. As an enterprise accessibility technology engineer, he channels lived experience into building inclusive workplace solutions.

Their paths may differ, but they point to the same conclusion: hearing loss doesn't limit success, it redirects it. What is the key to your personal breakthrough with hearing loss?

Ask for What You Want

People with disabilities such as hearing loss are a protected class under the ADA, and it's your right to ask for the accommodations you need to perform your job optimally.

Theo's initial requests for tools grew into broader workplace adoption. "What started as my need became a catalyst for inclusion," he explains.

Michael helps embed accessibility into corporate culture, turning individual needs into systemic solutions, while Ibrahim's advocacy at the state level has helped ensure that requests for access are no longer seen as exceptions, but as the standard everyone deserves.

Each individual request for access is a step toward a better system for those who follow. And when those individual requests come together, they form something bigger—a movement for systemic change.

Smith's Community Rewards Shop at Smith's with their Rewards card, and Smith's will make a donation to HLAA Albuquerque chapter. You get your usual rewards points.

1-800-444-8081, opt. 3 to sign up or re-enroll.

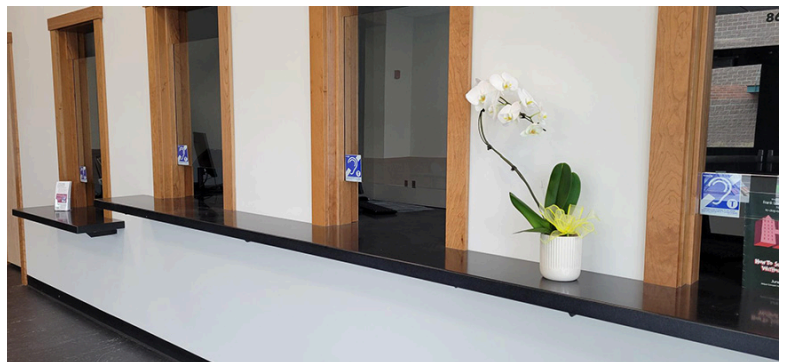
The HLAAAbq NPO number for Smith's is **NC419**.

Loop People, Loop Places

Ginevra Ralph

New Looped Ticket Windows

A picture speaks the proverbial thousand words! While the dreaded ticket window glass remains, each of the ticket windows in our new entrance has its own hearing loop. You can hear just your teller and eliminate ambient noise by turning on your telecoil! This is in Eugene (come visit) but easily installed anywhere. I can send you a photo of the underside with all the specs if you want to get one installed in your favorite counter!



In-Person Meeting Option Restored!

"Rod" Rodriguez, Editor

On January 17, we had our first hybrid meeting in years, including the option to attend in person at the Deaf Culture Center meeting room on the first floor of the PAH! Highland Plaza apartment building. We had to overcome some technical glitches, and the announcements did not go out as far in advance as we wished. On top of that, the PAH! suffered a flu problem that affected many residents. We wound up having only two attendees (not counting the presenter and other active participants)—neither one a resident.

Nonetheless, we had a healthy Zoom attendance, and good audience questions and participation. We thank Dr. Jacob Kahane for a thorough presentation of hearing loss medical care in New Mexico, from first contact with an audiologist or hearing technician up to surgical interventions, including implantable hearing devices.

We hope more of you who live in town will

join us in person in February. The topic and speaker are described on page 2. Please help us spread the word. Besides, our Hospitality Chair (Jim Twohig) had coffee & tea and some delicious home-cooked scones as snacks. The address is 5000 Central Ave SE, Albuquerque, NM 87108, and there is map on the back page of this newsletter. A close-up map below shows where to park and how to walk to the outside doors of the meeting room.



Hearing Loss Support Social

HLAA Santa Fe Chapter

Strategies on Coping With Your Hearing Loss

Saturday, February 21st, 10 am to 11:00 am



Travel Bug Santa Fe: Bring a friend — opportunity to talk about your hearing loss or ask questions

839 Paseo De Peralta

For information, contact John Hooper

johnhooper.ref@gmail.com

505-603-2994

Adult Aural Rehabilitation

Sarah Duncan, UNM Speech & Hearing Clinic

The UNM Speech and Hearing Clinic has started an adult aural rehabilitation group! This group is facilitated by graduate students and joined by an audiologist (Sarah Duncan, AuD). The group is open to all adults with hearing loss, including those who do not use amplification. We'll cover topics such as communication strategies, hearing and

cognition, and technology (just to name a few!). Please call or email for further details:

Thank you so much!

Sarah Duncan, AuD, CCC-A
Audiologist/Senior Lecturer III
UNM Speech and Hearing Clinic
SHS-Admin@unm.edu

Phone: (505)277-4453

Fax: (505)277-0968

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			Tuschhoff

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Support the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA). Become a member TODAY!

The Hearing Loss Association of America is a volunteer association of Hard of Hearing people, their relatives and friends. It is a non-profit, non-sectarian educational organization devoted to the welfare and interest of those who cannot hear well. **Membership in the national organization is automatic with any donation (separate from any Chapter dues). A \$45 or more donation to National HLAA provides a subscription to the bimonthly publication Hearing Life.**



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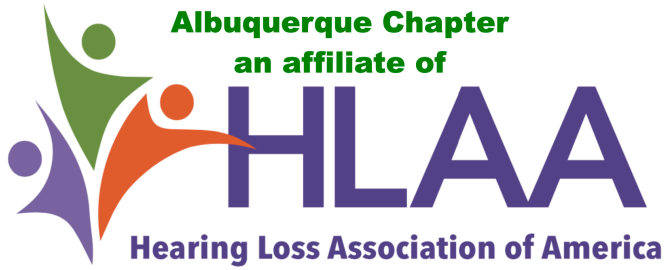
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