

# New hearing loss support group forms In Essex County

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The Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) is launching a new chapter in Essex County to support the needs of individuals and families with hearing loss.

The chapter's inaugural session is scheduled for 11:45 a.m. to 1:45 p.m. Saturday, March 7 at the Union Public Library, Second Floor, 1989 Morris Ave. Union.

The chapter will offer monthly meetings to provide education, information and support to aid people's hearing and communication skills.

The chapter will host open house monthly meetings, which feature guest speakers providing presentations leading to discussions on how to remedy broad based issues facing many with hearing loss.

At the inaugural meeting, Rashuan I. Boyd Jr. will speak on The Everyday Challenges for a Teen with Hearing Loss. Boyd, a sophomore at Mountain Lakes High School, who has had a severe hearing loss since age 4, wears two hearing aids. He will talk about how he manages peer pressure, feelings of isolation and the overall social stigma of hearing loss, while at the same time practicing the communication and listening skills required for academic learning.

In his talk, Boyd will share his interests and experiences growing up amidst school and pre-college pressures, isolation, bullying and the everyday issues that generally accompany and impact deaf and hard of hearing people and children like himself. Through it all, Boyd has maintained his standing as an honor-roll student who hopes to someday become an engineer.

Establishment of the new HLAA Essex County chapter stems from recognition of a gap in available support for locals with hearing loss, as it affects an estimated 157,000 people, accounting for one in every five individuals living in Essex County.

Latisha Porter-Vaughn, the chapter's first president, has a severe sensorineural hearing loss, wears two behind-the-ear aids and reads lips. A Newark resident, Porter-Vaughn holds a bachelor of science degree in business from University of Maryland, Melphi, and a master's degree in strategic communications from Seton Hall University, South Orange, a paralegal certificate from Boston (Mass.) University and is a board certified special education advocate.

Subsequent meetings will be announced individually as date or location may be changed or alternated to accommodate greater numbers of potential members within Essex County. Each session will be supported by Communication Access Real-Time Translations (CART), in which a stenographer will project everything spoken on to a large screen so that attendees should not miss a single word.