OLYMPIC HEARING & BALANCE

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CLINIC NEWS

Meet Dr. Kaitlin Rink!

Dr. Kaitlin Rink was born and raised in Puyallup, Washington. She earned her bachelor's in speech and hearing sciences from Washington State University and completed her doctorate in audiology at Western Washington University, which included an externship at Virginia Mason Franciscan Health in Seattle. In 2022, she published her research on remote auditory testing in the Journal of the Acoustical Society of America.

Dr. Rink's approach to audiology goes beyond the clinical setting. She has a passion for cochlear implants and diagnostics, and she believes in the transformative power that effective communication has on a patient's quality of life.

With a focus on patient-centered care, Dr. Rink strives to create an environment where individuals feel heard, understood and supported throughout their hearing health journey.

Outside of her professional endeavors, Dr. Rink enjoys reading mystery novels, sewing and going on long walks with her husband and daughter.

A Note from Nichole and Joe

Dear Friends,

If you have been a patient at Link Audiology or Integrity Hearing Services, now known as Olympic Hearing & Balance, for any length of time, you know that we have always believed hearing care should feel personal. You should know the people caring for you, feel comfortable asking questions and have someone you trust to help.

I'm Dr. Nichole Kingham, Director of Audiology at Hear Northwest, the parent company of Olympic Hearing & Balance. My husband, Joe Furness, and I are grateful to be part of this community and to help Olympic Hearing & Balance grow while staying true to what makes these practices special.

My passions are audiology, clinical excellence and ensuring the people providing your care have the training and education they need to serve you well. Joe is my partner in bringing that vision to life. He is the strategist and the person behind the scenes, making sure the systems, resources and support are in place to keep everything working well.

As we grow, we are helping bring this same approach to more hearing care clinics in communities throughout Washington. While these clinics may have different names, including Eastside Audiology, Olympic Hearing & Balance, and Seattle Hearing & Balance, the heart of what we are building for all of them is the same: excellent care, trusted relationships and patients who know they are more than a number.

Outside of work, Joe and I love getting out in our Jeep and exploring the mountains together. We enjoy the adventure, the quiet and, sometimes, figuring out how to get ourselves back home!

Our hope is simple. We want you to feel genuinely cared for and to know that you always have someone you can trust. We want you to be able to say, "I wouldn't go anywhere else."

With gratitude,

Nichole & Joe



HLAA & HLAA-WA:

Here for You Locally & Nationally



For many members, involvement with the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) begins when they are searching for answers, as it did for the Hearing Loss Association of America–Washington State Association (HLAA-WA) President Cheri Perazzoli.

Diagnosed with hearing loss as a child, Cheri did not receive hearing aids until she was a young adult. Like many people, she expected hearing aids alone to solve the problem.

Through HLAA, she learned practical strategies, discovered technologies beyond hearing aids and found a community of people who understood her experiences.

WHY CONNECTION MATTERS

Creating connection is at the heart of HLAA and HLAA-WA, which offer support groups, educational programs, community events and online gatherings.

Cheri believes that peer support can be transformative. “Information and talking with other people with lived experience is empowering and a wonderful way to feel understood and supported,” she said.

HEARING LOSS AFFECTS THE ENTIRE FAMILY

“We often say that hearing loss is not an individual’s disability; it impacts every relationship we have—family, friends, colleagues, everyone we need to interact with across our lives,” Cheri explained.

HLAA-WA welcomes family members and communication partners to participate in its programs and events. Education helps everyone understand how hearing loss affects communication and what strategies can improve success.

ADVOCACY THAT CHANGES LIVES

Nationally, HLAA works to ensure that people with hearing loss have equal access to communication, health care, technology and public services. Current advocacy efforts include expanding access to audiology care for seniors (HR 2725) and making hearing aids more affordable (HR 500 and HR 7770).

In Washington State, advocates have worked for decades to improve accessibility and hearing health care. Those efforts have led to expanded hearing aid insurance coverage, restoration of Medicaid hearing aid benefits for adults, improved consumer protections and more.

HLAA AND HLAA-WA ARE CRUCIAL

They help individuals stay informed about assistive technologies, accessibility solutions, communication strategies and advocacy opportunities.

As Cheri put it, “HLAA and HLAA-WA can see you through the challenges of hearing loss and help you learn to thrive, not merely survive.”

Learn more about HLAA at **www.hearingloss.org** and find local resources and community at **www.hearingloss-wa.org.**

This article was developed from an interview with Cheri Perazzoli, President of the Hearing Loss Association of America–Washington State Association (HLAA-WA).

FROM THE KITCHEN OF DR. NICHOLE KINGHAM

Fall Stovetop Compote

I love fall. There’s something about the crisp air, changing leaves, cozy sweaters and especially the smells that makes this my favorite time of year. Give me cinnamon, allspice, cloves and a little orange, and I’m happy!

This simple stovetop compote is one of my favorite ways to make the house smell like fall. It takes just a few minutes to put together, and there’s no need to bake anything.

WHAT YOU’LL NEED

- 1 apple, sliced
- 1 orange, sliced or quartered
- 2–3 cinnamon sticks
- 1 teaspoon whole cloves
- 1 teaspoon whole allspice
- 1–2 star anise (optional)
- 1–2 tablespoons cranberries (fresh or frozen, optional)
- A small sprig of rosemary (optional)
- 4–6 cups of water

PLACE IN A POT AND SIMMER

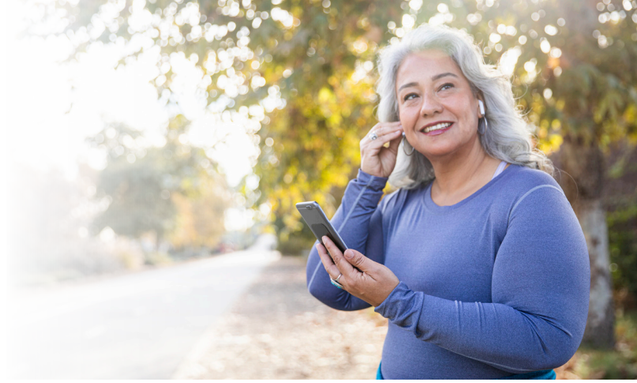
Add everything to a small saucepan and bring it just to a simmer. Turn the heat to low and let it gently simmer away, adding more water as needed. Your house will quickly start smelling like a cozy fall afternoon.

A little tip: Don’t let the pot boil dry! Keep an eye on the water level and add more as needed. You can use the same mixture for a day or two—just refrigerate it between uses.

No recipe required, really. Just toss in whatever reminds you of fall and enjoy the smell!

PRIORITIZE YOUR HEARING HEALTH

Before the Holidays



As a new year begins, many people commit to improving their health by focusing on exercise, nutrition and preventive care. However, one critical area that is often overlooked is hearing health.

Your ability to hear clearly is crucial—it affects how you connect with others, stay engaged at work and maintain your overall well-being. When you make caring for your hearing health part of your 2026 health routine, you’re taking a practical and proactive step toward a better quality of life.

THE IMPACT OF UNTREATED HEARING LOSS

Because hearing loss often develops gradually, the changes are subtle, and people frequently adapt without noticing the impact. Turning up the TV, asking others to repeat themselves or avoiding noisy settings are some of the telltale signs.

Over time, untreated hearing loss can lead to frustration, social withdrawal, listening fatigue and even relationship strain. In addition, research suggests that people with untreated hearing loss may be at an increased risk of cognitive decline, depression and reduced balance.

START WITH A HEARING CHECK-UP

A comprehensive hearing evaluation is simple, non-invasive and informative. It measures how well you hear tones, helps identify how your ears and brain process sound, how well you understand speech, and whether medical follow-up is needed. Even if hearing aids are not recommended, establishing a baseline is valuable. It allows you and your audiologist to track changes over time and intervene early if needed.

FIND YOUR HEARING SOLUTION

Today’s hearing aids are more advanced, discreet and effective than ever before. Patients frequently report increased confidence, reduced effort in conversations and a renewed enjoyment of social activities once they start wearing state-of-the-art devices.

As you plan for holiday get-togethers, consider adding a hearing check-up to your list. It will be important for you to hear clearly during the coming season of sharing, giving, caring, and celebration with friends and family.

Are you wondering how to maximize your insurance before the end of the year? **Call us at 253.237.9228 to learn more.**

